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**‘Tír na Scáile’ (*Shadowlands*)**  
**An exploration into the intercultural  
dimension of the therapeutic relationship**

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**Doctor in Counselling Psychology and Psychotherapy by  
Professional Studies**

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## **ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS**

Dedicated to the memories of my lovely, gentle mother, Mary, and beautiful brother, Gerry.

To my supervisors and colleagues, I give my deepest appreciation for their time, challenge, guidance, inspiration and motivation throughout this study.

To my family and friends, I give my deep-felt thanks for their love, support and encouragement.

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My unending appreciation I give to my husband, Kimmo, whose constant and steadfast presence has been my grounding from start to finish.

*"During the twilight of colonialism, a children's toy circulated in the "Big Houses" of the Irish Ascendancy<sup>1</sup> which purported to give the "British Empire at a glance". It took the form of a map of the world, mounted on a wheel complete with small apertures which revealed all that was worth knowing about the most distant corners of the Empire. One of the apertures gave a breakdown of each colony in terms of its "white" and "native" population, as if both categories were mutually exclusive. When it came to Ireland, the wheel ground to a halt for here was a colony whose subject population was both "native" and "white" at the same time. This was a corner of the empire, apparently, that could not be taken at a glance".*

- Gibbons (1996:149)

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<sup>1</sup> The colonizing protestant landlords, clergy, politicians.

## ABSTRACT

This study is concerned with the intercultural dimension of the therapeutic relationship, the main research question being:

*“How, in an English context, is the therapeutic work between a ‘white’ Irish client and a white English therapist/counsellor conceptualized or understood?”*

Due to a tendency in transcultural literature, training, research and practice to define racial and ethnic difference in terms of skin ‘colour’, underlying historical, socioeconomic and political racialization processes have remained largely unexamined. In addressing this gap, the study specifically explores the transgenerational impact of a joint colonial history on the present-day therapeutic relationship between ‘white’ Irish clients and white English therapists/counsellors from a client perspective. The ‘white’ Irish clients’ lived experiences, perceptions and understanding of cultural difference at interweaving societal, interpersonal and intrapsychic relational levels were captured.

Using a constructivist grounded-theory approach, a cooperative inquiry was undertaken with seven ‘white’ Irish therapists/counsellors who lived and had therapy in England. The data were systematically analysed to produce findings grounded in the clients’ words and lived experiences. The findings were presented to a group of white English therapists/counsellors during the course of a dialogic workshop. They indicate that the historical-colonial relational dynamics and the legacy of the associated racialization processes live on unacknowledged in the present-day therapeutic relationship between the ex-colonized and ex-colonizer.

The findings have implications for training, research and practice. They clearly indicate that the experience and effect of felt racial and ethnic difference reach far ‘beneath’ that which is perceived. Particularly significant was the identified need to reexamine constructs such as ‘race’, ‘colour’, ‘white’, ‘black’, ‘difference’ in light of the deeper historical, socioeconomic and political processes that produce them. Importantly, the study highlights the need for psychotherapists/counsellors to incorporate the greater cultural and historical context, together with its inherent power processes and structures, into the conceptualization of their client work. In doing so, the capacity to integrate information from multiple disciplines is deemed essential.

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## GLOSSARY

In this piece, I use a number of words and concepts, which I believe necessitate a definition in terms of their use in the document. Some terms I explain as they emerge in the text. Others I explain below.

The concepts of 'race', 'culture' and 'ethnicity' I consider ambivalent, multidimensional, fluid, dynamic and complex sociopolitical concepts that cannot be taken at face value and are context-bound. I believe we cannot ignore heterogeneity within 'racial', 'ethnic' or 'cultural' minority populations. Generalization across a defined 'group' is dangerous because individual differences within groups are then ignored. Each participant needs to be asked how they subjectively define themselves. These concepts cannot be extracted from historical context and function in the definition of political agendas. The experience differs with context (e.g. Irish experiencing in the United States and in the United Kingdom). If these concepts are salient in any specific context, they will have an impact on psychological experiencing, either directly and intentionally—e.g. Irish dancing—or indirectly and unconsciously: e.g. associations, dreams, attitudes, self-images, relational blueprints.

**Culture:** Culture is all-inclusive (gender, 'race', socioeconomic status, etc). I agree with Giger & Davidhizar's (1999) definition of 'culture' as a *"patterned behavioural response that develops over time as a result of imprinting the mind through social and religious structures and intellectual and artistic manifestations"*(p.3). The individual and the environment are bound in a mutually influential relationship, which produces cultural patterns within a group. This response is not only behavioural but also affects beliefs, values, worldview, the emotional experiencing of contexts, cognitions, self-image, aspirations and many other aspects of the person and is internalized during development and transmitted intergenerationally (Helman, 2000).

**Transculturalism, Interculturalism or Multiculturalism:** I have difficulty with the use of 'Multiculturalism' or 'Diversity' to describe cultural experiencing. These terms tend not to consider the relationship between various groups nor examine how culture develops or is defined (Donald et al., 1992). The power processes underlying relational dynamics remain unexamined. I have decided to use the term 'Transcultural' in referring to the work with 'black and minority ethnic people' e.g. Irish. 'Transculturalism' focuses on the power processes underlying relationships between 'cultures' and examines the political and historical origins of these processes. Culture is seen as transitory, context-bound and with the power to transform relationships. I agree with Utsey et al. (2005: 568) that *"racism and sexism are less things that one carries as they are relationships that are constituted and negotiated, often with great ambivalence and contestation, in daily life"*. 'Interculturalism' I use to describe both conscious and unconscious dynamics or interactions



between cultural subgroups or individuals, in which assumptions internalized regarding the culturally different counterpart come into play (Kareem et al., 1992).

**Race:** The term 'Race' I consider a political construct and not a biological fact (Senior & Bhopal, 1994). The process of racialization, I believe, is set in motion to justify economic and political domination of one group of people over another. Racial difference reflects difference in societal worth and is applied to a group by people outside the group (e.g. U.S. Census). Racialization, as Lentin (1999) points out, is always a dialectic: In defining an-Other, we also define ourselves. It is historically constructed and institutionally reinforced and therefore "*race matters*" (Jones, 2003: 277). I agree with Thompson (1996) that 'black' can never be seen as simply 'black'. What is important is the psychological and social experiencing rather than the skin colour. It is at once experienced and acted on as 'real', although always socially constructed. Meanings are shaped in context. Racism I understand as a pattern of discriminatory behaviour, which can be individual, institutional, societal or cultural. Therefore, I am more interested in the process of racialization itself as opposed to the construct 'race'.

**Ethnicity:** I agree with Phinney's (2000) definition of ethnicity as a multidimensional construct or identity. The term is attributed to or used as self-identification by subgroups with shared ancestry or common tradition e.g. values, customs, history, culture, race, language, religion, origin. Ethnicity is often considered as forming a boundary between 'us' and 'them' (See Bhui et al., 2007). Like Modood et al., 1997, I also argue that ethnicity is dynamic and flexible and is formed by the interweaving of social, political cultural, 'racial' and discriminatory relations between various ethnic groupings in context.

**Whiteness:** As mentioned above, 'race' I see as a 'floating signifier' rather than a stable truth or concept (Hall, 1996), the product of a process of racialization, which is set in motion in order to justify the subjugation of an-Other for gain. In my understanding, 'race' is used most commonly to define both genotypical and phenotypical differences between groups of human beings to which certain cultural characteristics are attributed in order to construct the rigid dualism of an 'us and them'. This construction is intricately interwoven into political, economic, ideological, societal and finally intrapsychic discourses and is thus 'made real'. Although racial categorization does not rely solely on skin colour (Hickman et al., 2005; Moodley, 2003), within the dominant discourses 'racism' has become almost exclusively associated with 'colour racism' (Lentin, 1999). Whiteness studies (see Allen, 1998) for example, originating in the United States describe the historical and cultural aspects of those identified as white in that context and how whiteness was socially constructed as an ideology indelible linked to social status. It was presented as something to be aspired to and bestowed upon those who supported its ideology. Moodley (2003) points out that this tendency to think in terms of 'matrices of black and white' has led to simplistic comparisons and contrasts between groups on the basis of skin colour alone and on the basis of superficial

constructs as opposed to deeper processes. Moodley (2003) warns that *“the physical materialisation of the skin colour into a metaphysical signifier must be interrogated, especially as psychotherapy ‘acts-out’ and ‘acts-in’ this space”* (p. 117). In my use of ‘whiteness’ in the political sense of the majority dominant power holding group in any particular context, I wish to challenge this tendency and deconstruct the constructs ‘black’ and ‘white’ by delving into the supporting and dynamic ideological processes below which have evolved from their man-made constructions in the 15<sup>th</sup> century and which are much more than skin deep (Dunbar-Ortiz, 1997). I thus use **white** to describe the dominant group and **‘white’** to describe those upon whom the dominant group bestows the term but not the power.

**Counsellor or Psychotherapist:** Although many writers insist that counselling and psychotherapy have distinct histories and are very different (Rowan, 2001; Harvie-Clark, 1999), there are others who use the terms counselling and psychotherapy as well as psychotherapist and counsellor interchangeably (Clarkson, 2003; Lapworth et al., 2001). As I believe the findings of this study are equally pertinent for both counselling and psychotherapy, I also use the terms interchangeably.

# 1 INTRODUCTION

*"People do not wake up one day and decide to act a certain way. Historical, sociological, anthropological, political and geographical explanations are needed to make sense of a person's life choices, life cycle events and patterns of individual or relational behaviour. If therapists lack the curiosity of an anthropologist to seek out information or do not become interested in the statistics that a good sociologist provides, much harm can be done"*

-Thomas et al. (2011:5)

I am Irish; I was raised Catholic and am of 'white' skin colour. This research journey has given me the space to reflect on what this means for me at multiple but mutually influential relational levels, from the past historical to the present-day therapeutic. I conclude that in order to understand the totality of the therapeutic relational, it is vital to consider its multiple contexts.

When I arrived in England to take my place on this doctoral course, I discovered that some of these contexts existed only as unexplored experiential 'shadowlands'. I had assumed that my many years living abroad had resulted in my integrating a secure sense of my Irish cultural self. I had worked with many different nationalities within a fluid, diverse environment. It had been easy, advantageous indeed, to be 'Irish' in my lives in Germany, Finland, Sweden, China, the United States and Middle East. Irish politics and history often emerged in conversation with people unfamiliar with the dynamics intertwining these 'West' European islands. The well-broadcast conflict's origins were usually attributed to religious 'bickering'. I always felt confident in sharing my cognitive analysis, my historical review, never shying away from debate. In retrospect, I recognized that none of these exchanges had involved a white English person. That I had avoided. I was to discover in England that I had merely succeeded in developing a cognitive defence, which was protecting a very fragile sense of my Irish cultural self.

## 1.1 The Professional Context

My emerging therapeutic framework, informed by the voices of social constructionism and postmodernism, provided the compass for my exploration into these shadowlands. Many of these voices I became acquainted with when working towards my first degree in Communication Studies. It was here that I first encountered psychological theories but through a political language that broke down the barriers of schoolism and positioned the psyche deep within the social realm. I was introduced to Freud's (1923) ideas of the unconscious but simultaneously to Gergen's (1982) focus on the mutual connectedness of personal and social worlds. Lewin's (1952) field theory's lens became that through which I engaged with knowledges encountered. Integrating these ideas gave me a new way of flexibly linking behaviour, personality, relationship-in-context over time. I came to recognize how my own selves, relationships and roles were embedded in ever-changing complex, overlapping systems. This university experience was also greatly enriched by studying the media

and its multiple methods of constructing and de-/re-constructing messages, truths and communication. I was introduced here to critical theorists such as Foucault (1970). I became more and more aware of the hidden power processes inherent in all the institutes, systems and theories I encountered, whether familial, historical, governmental, business or mental health. I gained the lasting impression that knowledges at intrapsychic, interpersonal and social levels are ever-interwoven and mutually influential. My experience of working and living abroad, my many years of working in marketing, advertising, PR and coaching, together with these previously attained academic knowledges led to my pursuing integrative psychotherapy as opposed to studying in any one of the three main psychological schools<sup>2</sup>. The whole integrated picture was important for me.

In considering the dynamics of any therapeutic dyad, I hold a number of assumptions. Working interpersonally from an integrated intersubjective and relational perspective, I believe that the therapeutic work is played out in the complex meeting of both the therapist's and client's transgenerationally-influenced intrapsychic in the intersubjective (Benjamin, 1995; Aron, 1991; Stolorow et al., 1987). This encounter is embedded in its ecological, political, socioeconomic, cultural and historical contexts (Wampold, 2001; Sullivan, 1953). I believe that not only do two intrapsychic worlds meet therapeutic interpersonal space but also the transgenerational histories within which both participants' selves are embedded. This energy creates what I envisage as a 'cultural/historical third', which emerges from and impacts on the therapeutic relationship (Gerson, 2004). Thus as professionals, I believe it essential to include the broader context in any deliberation on our meetings with clients, lest we miss the ground in which the figure is deeply embedded.

## 1.2 Origin of the Thesis

On reflecting on the broader contextual embeddedness of the therapeutic dyad, I also dwelled on my own embeddedness in the various contexts of my worlds and on my own insecurities around my 'Irishness' in the English context. I was aware of a sense of shame regarding my accent, my 'Hiberno-English' and my ethnicity in this new group in London. It was silencing me. This shame seemed to drown out a more difficult emotion, anger, which sometimes welled up but was never voiced in contact with English colleagues. I reflected on how different and confusing it felt being Irish in an English context as opposed to others. I began asking myself whether Irish people living in England had experienced similar feelings and, if so, how they had managed them. I considered the broader historical context. I asked myself how these Irish positioned their historical and cultural selves in England against the background of colonisation, marked by a history of dispossession, loss of language and culture, Famine, emigration and political divide.

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<sup>2</sup> The three main schools being: the psychoanalytic (based on Freud's theories of the *unconscious* mind); the humanistic (emerging from theorists such as Maslow (1972) and his *self-actualization* theory) and the cognitive-behavioural (originating in the theories of *conditioning* proposed by Pavlov (1927/1960), among others).

At the same time, I became increasingly aware of the significance of my 'white' skin colour vis-à-vis other ethnic groups in England which shared a similar history of colonisation and with whom I identified. In my studies and in discussion with colleagues, it appeared that issues of difference were considered only if they could be perceived i.e. in terms of skin colour. I belong to an ethnic minority who cannot be identified on the 'surface', as such. By merely remaining silent or by acquiring an English accent, I could superficially 'blend in' with the dominant English majority and perhaps benefit from the 'unearned privileges' that McIntosh (2003) claims my 'white' skin bestows. However, if I did hide behind this 'white' skin, with whom would I then identify or be identified? Would my feelings of shame, inferiority and anger simply dissipate? How then would I regard others with an Irish accent or people from other minority groups with similar histories of colonisation? How would I believe they regarded me? Would I assume the English Other would be 'convinced' by my camouflage? If I had raised children in England, what would I have communicated to them? McIntosh's privileges appeared to be tied to many conditions.

### *1.2.1 A Missing Piece in the Intercultural Therapeutic Space?*

I widened my reflection to include the interpersonal dynamics of the therapeutic dyad. I had never worked with an English therapist. What if I were to do so? How would all that be managed, worked on, addressed? Would this emotional relational difficulty sit with me in that relationship as it sat with me in other relationships with white English Others. Would I, as the client, ever 'go there'? Would the therapist, in the conceptualization of our work, consider how our deeply entwined histories may be present for me in the relationship?

From Irish trainee psychotherapist/counsellors living in England, I learned of similar feelings of shame and inferiority, but also of resignation. Some had changed their accent, to melt into the dominant culture and then "*have no problems*". One Irish trainee therapist, for example, came to England at the age of 10 but now at 30 disclosed with relief in her voice that she has "*rid (her)self*" of any visible traces of Irishness. Another Irish therapist revealed the financial investment she had made in elocution lessons on coming to England. She felt that losing her accent was a "*survival strategy*". On the other hand, a second-generation Irish therapist was saddened and angry that neither her English nor Irish counterparts took "*her Irish self seriously*". She had given up trying to gain recognition. This sense was mirrored in the words of another second-generation colleague who commented "*I sometimes wished that I had a different colour skin, as a more visible sign...*" Another second generation Irish therapist shared: "*an English person would never be interested in an Irish experience*", adding that if so he would '*distrust*' the motivation. I was saddened by the pressure some Irish had felt to change their names, the pronunciation of their names, their personal narrative due to fear. All those questioned stressed that they experienced themselves as 'different' in the intercultural space with white English Others. In the cases where I asked if this had been brought into therapy with their white English therapist/counsellor, the answer was "*no*". One Irish colleague

mused: *"I think that they (English colleagues) don't quite see Ireland as a colony...if you ask them... they cannot even conceptualize it".*

From some of my English counterparts, I learned that the possibility of such an 'issue of difference' had never been considered in the conceptualization of their therapeutic work with 'white' (Irish) clients. *"I had simply never thought about these differences and they're staring me in the face!"*, said a therapist of over 20 years. A number of therapists commented on how they tend not to *"notice"* that the client may be Irish. Yet, I overheard one of these same therapists shortly afterwards commenting on an Irish colleague *"Now she does look Irish today!"*. On my probing into what that meant, she answered with hesitation and unease *"She looks sickly today?"*. In my more in-depth conversations with colleagues, it was reflected back to me that such assumptions and stereotypical images appear to arise automatically.

This missing piece in the therapeutic encounter troubled me. I wondered if 'difference' remained unacknowledged by the English therapist/counsellor due to the problematic historiographic legacy and unfinished business it represents. I wondered what had been transmitted by the media, government, institutions and family transgenerationally and what may have been internalized by the 'white' Irish client and the white English therapist/counsellor. I felt a need to understand how this joint history may impact the therapeutic encounter.

### *1.2.2 A Missing Piece in Counselling Psychology Research, Literature and Practice?*

I wondered how such a long-standing and intensely interwoven historical past appeared to have no place in my colleagues' thinking about the interpersonal dynamics of the therapeutic endeavour, despite the emotional worlds it appeared to fuel. I looked to the literature and research on transcultural therapy, anticipating a wealth of information. The Irish do make up *"...one of the largest ethnic groups in the UK..."*(ICAP<sup>3</sup>, 2006/07).

In my interaction with the literature and research, however, I became acutely aware that generally the cultural context appears to have been left largely unaddressed across the many perspectives in psychotherapy (Tuckwell, 2002; Yi, 1998; Evans, 2007). I established that the work on ethnicity that was being done focused almost exclusively on difference along the line of skin colour. What of differences under the skin?

In inquiring into this apparent overall lack of interest in transcultural psychology, many fellow therapists/counsellors commented that psychological knowledges and practice were somehow apolitical (Cromby et al., 2011). A picture emerged of a therapeutic encounter insulated from the outside world.

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<sup>3</sup> Immigrant Counselling and Psychotherapy.

I could not sit easily with this position. I believe no person, relationship nor theory exists in the abstract. In agreement with sociological theorists such as Foucault (1967) and Gergen (1985), I believe both major theoretical meta-narratives of psychology and individual micro-narratives of practice are located in the socio-economic-political contexts in which knowledge/power complexes are produced, internalized and lived. I contest that psychotherapy and counselling are political endeavours (Pilgrim, 1997; Leader, 2011). My overarching research aim was to put the therapeutic dyad in context.

### *1.2.3 The Researcher Interviews*

In doing this, I decided to organize researcher interviews to clarify assumptions, blind spots and beliefs I was bringing to the research (Morrow, 2005). Two colleagues (Argentinian and Portuguese) agreed to interview me on the topic. The interviews uncovered my anger, my fear of being shamed and a deep need to find some pride in my cultural self in relationships with my English Other. I kept searching for words to explain the feelings and often resorted to “*it’s too complicated*”. However, these interviews supported me greatly. We linked my present difficult emotions to familiar childhood emotional memories in interactions with neighbours of the colonising protestant ascendancy, who remained as large landowners following Irish independence. These interactions often left me feeling similarly shamed and inferior but for no identifiable reason. Our conversations uncovered parallel dynamics in ‘West European–South American’ therapeutic dyads. Something bigger was at play. I often returned to these interviews during the research process in distinguishing between my own constructs and those of my colleagues.

This document describes my exploration into this dimension of the therapeutic relationship space I have come to call the ‘intercultural shadowlands’. I first describe my encounter with the literature (Chapter 2), then my path through my choice of research methodology and the research process itself (Chapter 3), onto my findings (Chapter 4) and to the discussion (Chapter 5) in which I again revisit the literature in light of the research findings.

*Reflections on my emotional journey:* In this inquiry, I have aimed to question a subjective reality which, from my bodily reactions and a particular context-specific emotional confusion, I sensed was an invisible, taken-for-granted relational given. As an Irish individual, I sensed I was attributed and automatically inhabited a predetermined fixed, known but unspoken, 'Irish' slot in 'the' reality of the relational matrix in the English context. I knew my 'place' as an Irish cultural being in interaction with English cultural beings. I knew how to live up to some unspoken, perhaps even unthought, expectations. I could not find words to explain what was happening, but I automatically knew how I was to behave or adapt in order to flourish in the intercultural space: *'if I silence any negative emotions in interaction with English counterparts and if I appear nice and harmless, I can survive this course'*. I knew never to express any anger regarding my history of colonization or indeed regarding any present-day injustice I may experience in the intercultural space. I followed this safe, silent path in the initial years of training.

In the initial year, I often found myself either automatically taking on the 'clown' role in the training group or experienced myself as inarticulate and inappropriately emotional when attempting to make a serious contribution. Later, I ridiculed myself for being 'too much' and attempted to hold myself back from interaction throughout discussions. Although I was getting by, I was aware of an internal emotional quagmire as I started to observe how I was positioning my own cultural self. I felt fraudulent and inauthentic. I was wearing some sort of mask that stuck like glue. I tried to confide in my Irish colleagues, but they preferred to avoid intercultural and historical relational themes involving the English and the Irish. With time, I sensed an anger and frustration growing towards both my Irish colleagues, who didn't want to talk about the political dimension of our relationship with our English counterparts, as well as with English colleagues and trainers who insisted on our 'sameness'. I felt so different. Eventually, I realized that most of all I was angry with myself for being afraid of expressing what I was feeling. I was terrified such a disclosure would have devastating consequences on my relational worlds, such as exclusion, rejection or destructive angry reactions. At the same time, I was also becoming aware of the shocking lack of respect I harboured for the 'cultural self' I was presenting in this English context.

As time went by, it became very clear to me that silencing this emotional world may be even more detrimental than expressing it. During my training, I had been in therapy for a number of years, and it was clear that these feelings had to do with a process far bigger than just the individual or the interpersonal. Eventually I developed the courage, with the support of my German therapist and Indo-American clinical supervisor at a safe distance in Germany, to begin to critically examine the context, structures, feelings, meanings and underlying assumptions accompanying what I intuited to be a long-standing, apparently stable but historically-embedded, co-constructed and context-bound reality. I found this process of exploration and meaning-making with empathic and



challenging counterparts liberating and empowering. I began to reflect. However, at the same time, I was conscious that once again I was processing these emotions with non-English counterparts. It was safe. In undertaking this research path, I was very aware that I was taking up a challenge to confront my own fears and overcome many personal avoidance strategies in an English context. This was a frightening prospect but also an exhilarating one as I began to feel an emotional knot slowly unravelling itself within.

## 2 THE LITERATURE REVIEW

*"My problem is essentially the definition of the implicit systems in which we find ourselves prisoners; what I would like to grasp is the system of limits and exclusion which we practice without knowing; I would like to make the cultural unconscious apparent!"*

-Foucault (1989:71)

On my personal journey through multiple global cultures, I have become acutely aware, following many confusing, and some painful, experiences, of the importance of locating my experiences and interactions within the fluidity and multiplicity of the cultural contexts that I inhabit. I attempt to locate my therapeutic work similarly within the broader cultural contexts in which relational processes are embedded, forever aware that I, as an integral part of the structure, can never attain a completely objective overview of the processes. In attempting to construct a framework of knowledges for conceptualizing the therapeutic work between a 'white' Irish client and a white English therapist, I am accompanied by Sayal's words:

*"As a clinician, I think it is crucial to relate personal misery to its environment, history and political context. If you rob a person of their history, you rob them of their sense of self"*

Sayal (1989:6)

I assume that the legacy of the historical relationship between Ireland and England will greatly impact the interpersonal dynamics of present-day relationships, including that of therapy. Due to the centuries-long colonial relationship between the nations, the postcolonial discourse was the natural broader framework for my own conceptualization of 'white' Irish-English relational dynamics at societal, interpersonal and intrapsychic levels. In engaging with this discourse and its knowledges, I hold ideas from poststructuralism in mind. Foucault (1967), for example, spoke of our socioeconomic, political and professional worlds being constructed according to knowledge/power structures. Certain knowledges or discourses constructed by those in power are engineered into societal and institutional structures, which gain the status of 'truth', appearing 'normalized' and 'self-evident' due to their authoritative force. Feminists within the postcolonial tradition (Williams, 1993; Hill, 1989) speak of such power being located at the "*intersectionalities of class, race, culture, ability and sexual orientation, gender identities and religion*" (Hernández, 2008:11). If the cultural embeddedness and the related power/knowledge structures are excluded in conceptualizing therapeutic work, poststructuralists and postcolonialists warn that both internalized dominance and oppression can become normalized within interpersonal interaction (Spivak, 1991). I was mindful of this warning throughout the literature review. I wondered what the societal and professional 'truths' regarding therapeutic work between a 'white' Irish client and white English therapist may be, by whom they may have been constructed and whether they were promoting healing.

## 2.1 Transcultural Studies in the English Context

Watson (2011) points out that transcultural<sup>4</sup> studies in the United Kingdom originated in the 'multicultural' counselling theory and practice developed in the United States. In the 1970s, 'multiculturalists' emerged as the 'fourth force' to challenge the ethnocentric bias and individualistic stance of the three dominant 'truths' in the psychology field at the time: the psychoanalytic; humanistic and cognitive-behavioural schools (Sue et al., 1996). Walls (2004) points out, for example, that psychoanalysis emerged during the age of enlightenment in the late Victorian period against the background of modernism and its associated knowledges. Concepts such as scientific explanations, universalism, biological reductionism and liberal individualism were established as 'truths'. Darwin's (1874) theory of evolution had just been published, and his ideas of the 'survival of the fittest' gained widespread acceptance in academia. Capitalism was thriving and colonialism its preferred vehicle. In justifying colonialism together with its process of plantation and extraction of resources from colonies, 'colonized peoples' were construed as 'inferior' and biological evidence was constructed as support (Curtis, 1984). The contextual dimension was initially almost ignored in psychoanalysis in favour of the biology of the 'individual'<sup>5</sup>. Similarly, an exclusive individualist focus also took hold in the schools of humanism and cognitive-behaviourism (McLeod, 1999). Multiculturalists warn against the tendency of these knowledges to ignore the contextual in the conceptualization of counselling work. They caution that *"so-called disorder is often a reaction to disordered social conditions such as racism and oppression"* (Ivey et al., 2003:323). By incorporating the transcultural dimension into the respective frameworks, it is believed that the ethnocentricity of the established schools can be countered (Corey, 1996).

The US multicultural movement had a clear political agenda. Writers hoped to establish a 'black psychology' to disprove established racializing theories, which postulated that 'race' was a biological structure (Mio et al., 1999). Keeping with the structural definition of 'difference' in the United States, which tends to both define difference in terms of skin colour while interchanging the concepts of ethnic and racial difference (Hochschild et al., 2007), the focus of the rich body of literature and research work pertaining to 'ethnicity/race'<sup>6</sup> has mainly related to 'white European-American therapist' and 'Black/African-American client' racial identity development models (Cross, 1971; Utsey et al., 2005). These models highlighted that both 'white' and 'black' identity forms at the intersection of sociopolitical, cultural practices and the personal.

In the United Kingdom, the general area of transcultural literature, research and training is

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<sup>4</sup> See Glossary in for my definitions of 'transculturalism', 'multiculturalism' and 'interculturalism'.

<sup>5</sup> Relational turn in psychoanalysis was triggered within the framework of the new postmodern paradigm (Kuhn, 1962). Relationists such as Mitchell (2000), Benjamin (1995) and Cushman (1995) proposed that the interpersonal is fundamentally cultural. Family, gender, class, culture, politics, 'race' and 'ethnicity' are conceptualized as interwoven into the therapeutic relationship, producing multiple intercultural power processes.

<sup>6</sup> See glossary for my definitions of 'race' and 'ethnicity'.

beginning to grow, albeit at a much slower pace than in the United States (Lago, 2011; Moodley et al., 2006). As I began to dip into the existing material on issues of race and ethnicity in counselling and psychotherapy in England, I became aware that, as in the United States, difference appeared to be determined, predominantly if not exclusively, along the lines of skin colour. Lago (2011), editor of the current edition of the *Handbook of Transcultural Counselling and Psychotherapy*, states that he uses 'blackness' 'to describe those who are not the "traditional power holders of members of the dominant group in a society"' (p.6). However, as I read my way through the book, I discovered that this political use of 'blackness' appears to have merged with skin colour to create a representation of 'the colonized'. This is particularly evident in the chapters that examine and critique professional counselling practice in the United Kingdom. However, this trend appears to merely reflect a tendency in the broader UK society (Hickman et al., 2005; Tuckwell, 2002). Ethnic difference in the United Kingdom is defined within a postcolonial discourse based on skin colour.

However, this form of categorization I thought must automatically marginalize minority experiences within the 'black' and 'white' groups and those people who identify themselves as 'mixed race' or 'dual heritage' within categories. The actual dynamics of racialization in such cases may continue to play out underneath the 'skin' (Moodley, 2003). I found myself wondering where Irish experiencing sits in the discourse? Due to its apparent 'whiteness', the Irish ethnic group appears to remain outside the postcolonial discourse and with that out of consciousness in the debates, training and practice of transcultural counselling and psychotherapy. Are the members of the white Irish client group being robbed of their history?

### *2.1.1 Ethnic Difference in England: A Black-White Divide*

Following the completion of my analysis, I turned to a more in-depth exploration of the existing body of counselling psychology literature and research in England to identify concepts that may inform my theory building. I decided to focus on four widely cited qualitative and mixed-methods research pieces, which address relational dynamics across the 'black/white' divide.

#### *2.1.1.1 Studies on 'Black' Experiencing*

Locating her work within a postcolonial framework and drawing on a number of qualitative methods, McKenzie-Mavinga (2005) examines how trainee counsellors ('white/ex-colonizer' and 'black/ex-colonized') understand black<sup>7</sup> issues in training and therapeutic work. Two useful concepts were identified. First, the concept of 'finding a voice' pointed to the importance of allowing space for the silenced voices of 'black' minority issues. Second, the concept of 'recognition trauma' described the emotions both 'white' and 'black' trainees experienced in discussing racism

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<sup>7</sup> McKenzie-Mavinga (2005) uses 'black' to refer to research participants from the 'non-white' Asian and African-Caribbean communities. The researcher describes herself as 'black'. I have difficulty with the broad uncritical use of this term for two reasons. First, the term suggests this to be an homogeneous group and fails to consider the diversity within groups (see The Parekh Report (Runnymede Trust, 2000). Second, the focus on 'skin colour' reifies a biological discourse which was prevalent during colonial periods (see Giger et al., 1999)

in the interracial space. 'White' participants were recorded as experiencing 'guilt', 'shame' and 'fear' whereas 'black' participants expressed 'fear', 'distrust' and 'rage' about being victims and the process of internalizing oppression<sup>8</sup>. This recognition trauma led to a felt 'stuckness' in the relationship, which hindered deeper exploration.

A second researcher in the area, Alleyne (2006), outlines how the trauma of colonisation and slavery continues to affect 'black' peoples' relationships with 'white' people in the present-day workplace<sup>9</sup>. Drawing on the psychodynamic literature (Klein, 1964), she argues that, within a process of projective-identification, the original oppression becomes reenacted. One group's superiority is maintained by projecting negative qualities onto another. The second group then identifies with these due to a self-part which acts as an 'internal oppressor'. This self-part carries the transgenerational 'prejudices, projections, intergenerational wounds' and 'cultural shame' and shapes the pre-transference and attachment patterns with 'white' others. She distinguishes this term from that of 'internal oppression', which refers to the processes of internalizing attitudes and values systems of the dominant culture that hinder authentic experiencing and acting. The historical past fuses with present functioning, creating a state of co-dependency and enmeshment.

#### *2.1.1.2 Studies on 'White' Experiencing*

Ryde (2009) and Tuckwell (2002) have studied 'white' experiencing in relation to 'black' experiencing from a sociopolitical viewpoint, using the above-mentioned US 'racial identity models' (Utsey et al., 2005) as a basis. These writers emphasize the political and historical context in which the terms 'black' and 'white' have been socially constructed "*to justify imperial policies and economic domination of black people by white people*" (Tuckwell, 2002:4). Both writers consider how 'white' people have experienced themselves as the colour neutral "superior dominant powerful majority" in the Western colonizer role. Tuckwell (2002), like Alleyne (2004), makes sense of this finding by drawing on the psychodynamic literature. She argues that, in the absence of sufficient reflection, the unintentional repetition of traditional power imbalances and various unconscious enactments play out in the therapeutic relationships. Both Ryde (2009) and Tuckwell (2002) address their research participants' expressed colonial 'white' guilt and shame. These feelings were understood as arising "*in the wake of our historic role as colonial oppressor*" (Tuckwell, 2002:209). 'White' people, both writers propose, can face and work through these emotions within the therapeutic process.

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<sup>8</sup> A transgenerational process which leads to colonized peoples' internalizing negative cognitive patterns about themselves in relation to the white Other. In the original period of oppression, the oppressed internalize an inferiority complex that is triggered when interacting with the dominant white world in the here and now. Fanon, 1967, sees this transgenerational relationship as creating a 'massive psychoexistential complex'. (p. 12).

<sup>9</sup> Alleyne (2006) uses 'black' to refer "*mainly to people with known African heritage and those who can be discriminated against because of their skin colour, e.g. 'Asians'*" and 'White' "*to represent people who are in the majority and who are not likely to experience racism as a result of their skin colour*"(p. 7).

Although recognizing the powerful insights provided by these 'black' and 'white' studies for an understanding of the cultural dynamics at play in a client-therapist dyad historically representing that of the colonized-colonizer relationship, I was struck by the fact that Irish interviewees were allocated to the 'white' dominant 'colonizing' group due to their skin colour. Consideration was not given to the Irish ethnic minority, which has also suffered oppression as a colony and is 'black' in the political sense. When reflecting on my own ethnic position, I conclude that the Irish identity lends this discussion another lens of complexity. I am West European, am 'white skinned' but have shared historically and culturally the colonial experiences of what the above-named authors call 'non-white minority groups' outside Western Europe. Following from that, could I assume that I also share a similar intrapsychic developmental journey? Ryde (2009) expresses some surprise that 'Even the Irish have not always been counted as White' (Ryde, 2009:34). I noted, however, that she neglected to expand on if and when the 'Irish' stopped being 'black'. I had a sense of being confined to a 'category' to which I do not belong in this English context. I felt disempowered. One of the main strengths of postcolonial analysis is that it widens, instead of narrows, the interpretive perspective, which is another way of saying it liberates instead of further constricting and colonizing the mind. I stepped back from the multicultural literature in an attempt to expand its boundaries and incorporate a postcolonial Ireland.

### *2.1.2 The White-White Divide: Ireland and Postcolonialism*

Postcolonial theories address how the past, shaped by the structures of colonialism and its agents, manifest themselves in the contemporary culture and psychology of ex-colonies. As is evident from the above brief extract from the transcultural studies in counselling psychology in England to date, the majority of work appears to be located within a poststructuralist, postcolonial framework across a 'black/white' (skin 'colour') divide. I understand the process of colonialization, however, as a feature of a global socio-economic-political machinery, which, in rationalizing economic plantation and resource extraction, constructs and treats colonized peoples regardless of skin colour as inferior and in need of a cultural conversion. This process I see to be not only economic and political but also psychological and ideological (Fanon, 1967). Below, in Figure 2.1, I include a timeline of the Irish-English historical which includes key markers of the colonial relationship.

Event	Date	Effect
Norman Invasion of Ireland under Strongbow	1169	Under Henry II, direct English rule of Ireland, lasting 700 years began. The Statutes of Kilkenny in 1366 introduced a ban on Gaelic into law. Irish property owners required to adopt English surnames or be dispossessed.
Full colonization and plantations of Ireland with Protestant British. (Nine Years War, Confederate Wars, Cromwell's subjugation of Ireland)	1536 - 1691	First full English conquest of Ireland under Henry VIII following the Reformation. Anglican reformation imposed on Ireland. English and Scottish Protestant families received land as rewards for loyalty. Irish families displaced. 1537 act presented the English language as the only choice for 'His Highness's true and faithful subjects' (Cahill, 2007:116). Resources flow from Ireland to England. Irish sold into slavery from 15 <sup>th</sup> to 18 <sup>th</sup> century.
Penal Laws	1691 - 1782	Irish Catholics banned from owning land, public office, practicing law, producing/printing books/newspapers, teaching or sending their children to Europe to study. English enforced as language of law. Growth of illegal 'Hedge Schools' (Irish children were taught all subjects including Gaelic)
Act of Union	1801	Parliament closed in Dublin, moved to Westminster following the United Irishmen Rising of 1798. English established as Ireland's official language.
The Famine (An Gorta Mór)	1845 - 1849	1 million people died of hunger whilst the world's richest nation looked on. After potato blight destroyed main source of nation's food needs in 1845, Westminster continued to export grain from Ireland 1845 - 1847. A soup-kitchen scheme set up for 5 months in 1847 was discontinued despite continued food shortage and rising death rates. Westminster allowed landlords ruthlessly evict up to 500,000 people for failing to pay rents 1846-1854. Laissez-faire economic strategies, a Protestant evangelical belief in divine Providence and a strong prejudice against Irish Catholics led to Westminster's inaction (Donnelly, 2011). Ireland's population fell by 3 million due to death and emigration.
Easter Rising	1916	Rising was crushed and leaders were executed without trial
War of Independence	1919 - 1921	The Government of Ireland Act partitioned Ireland into predominantly Protestant 'Northern Ireland' and Catholic 'Southern Ireland' in 1920.
Irish Free State established	1922	Irish Free State accorded the status of a Commonwealth dominion.
Irish Civil War	1922	
Independent Republic of Eire declared	1949	Ireland withdrew from the Commonwealth and the Irish Republic was inaugurated.
The Troubles	1968 - 1998	Catholic minority in Northern Ireland fight for civil, political and economic rights. British troops sent to Northern Ireland in 1969 to maintain order. Troops were seen as allies of the Protestant majority. Internment introduced in 1971. Policy of stop and search adopted. Selected number of prisoners were tortured. (Amnesty International, 1975) During this period such tragedies as Bloody Sunday occurred in which British soldiers shot 26 civil rights activists, 13 of whom died. Troubles extended to England.
Guilford and Birmingham Pub Bombings	Oct. 5, Nov. 22, 1974	
Prevention of Terrorism Act is enacted.	28 Nov., 1974	Dual legal system established. People could be detained for up to 7 days without reason. The Act was renewed annually for more than 25 years. The Irish community as a 'suspect community' (Hillyard, 1993)
Birmingham 6, Maguire 7 and Guilford 4 arrested, detained	Nov. and Dec. 1974	The detainees were charged. It was later established that detainees were tortured whilst in custody. Confessions were later recognized as coerced and thus wrongfully attained. However 15 years passed before their release.
Release of Guilford 4, Birmingham 6, Maguire 7	1989 - 1991	
Good Friday Agreement	Apr. 1998	Both communities' concerns addressed. Decommissioning of arms followed. Security measures were loosened.

Fig. 2.1. Timeline of Irish-English Historical Relationship

From the initial stages of my exploration into the postcolonial literature, I discovered Ireland to be conspicuously absent. Ireland has not been mentioned in the critical works in postcolonial studies e.g. Williams et al. (1994). In some works, Ireland has been incorporated undifferentiated into Englishness e.g. Ashroft et al. (1989). The postcolonial theorist Murray (2006) asks of Said's (1978) seminal book on colonial imperialist ideology, *Orientalism*, where the ontological and epistemological distinctions lie for similar ideological knowledges constructed in and for the West that is Ireland and not the Occident. It appears to be difficult to incorporate Ireland into the discourse. Cleary (2006) points out that "*debates about whether Ireland was or was not a colony have rarely got beyond questions of geo-cultural location and constitutional statute*"(p.45). This is the case, he notes, although Ireland's colonial history reads "*like a history of colonialism itself*" (p.45).

### 2.1.2.1 Colonizing Ireland

Cleary (2003) points out that, regardless of location of the target nation, the implemented processes of colonialism remain standard across the globe:

*Economic Invasion:* Curtis (1984) asserts that the Irish were the first to encounter the terror and violence of colonialism, which involved systematic eviction, plantation and resource exploitation. The existing Irish economy was 'raped and underdeveloped' and the most valuable agricultural products were exported. The Irish were left to subsist on potatoes (Tilki, 1994). The greatest of the tragedies unfolding in the colonial period was that of the Irish Famine<sup>10</sup>. The practice of forced labour was widespread. O'Callaghan (2001) describes how during the Cromwellian period alone 50,000 men, women and children were sold into slavery in Barbados and North America.

*The Cultural Invasion:* Lloyd (2000) explains how colonialists overcame the obstacle of the native culture by "*colonizing the mind*" (Said, 2003:179) and training the colonized into 'acting' white (Fanon, 1967). In Ireland, this involved the institutionalization of English as the dominant language and part of the discourse of power as well as the outlawing and strategic elimination of native cultural practices such as Catholicism and Gaelic. This often involved devaluation of the Irish culture in schooling and physical force (Curtis, 1984).

Social constructionists postulate that 'truths' are upheld through language, which in turn serves to produce and justify power relations (Gergen, 1985; Foucault, 1989). Fanon (1967) asserts that colonisation through a language has huge psychological implication for one's consciousness as through the language one also assumes a culture and gives weight to its civilization. In order to

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<sup>10</sup> During the years of the Great Famine or An Gorta Mór (1845-1851) the potato crop failed. The Irish population fell by 23%. One million people died and a further one million emigrated, most to America on 'coffin ships'. These people were mainly Irish Catholic. Sir Charles Trevelyan, responsible for Famine relief in 1848, commented in one of his papers: '*The judgement of God sent the calamity to teach the Irish a lesson...The real evil with which we have to contend is not the physical evil of the Famine, but the moral evil of the selfish, perverse and turbulent character of the people*'. Trevelyan later received a knighthood for his services to Ireland. *The Irish Crisis* published in 1848 contains his unsympathetic views on the Famine and its victims ( Source [http://multitext.ucc.ie/d/Charles\\_Edward\\_Trevelyan](http://multitext.ucc.ie/d/Charles_Edward_Trevelyan)).



survive and thrive economically, the Irish had to suppress and deny their own culture. In adopting the enforced English language, the Irish also took on English cultural 'truths' and power structures. English became the new channel of making meaning of all aspects of life, including the past. In this new worldview, colonisation came to represent Ireland's history and all previous history was reconstructed as barbaric, wild and savage (Greenslade, 1992).

*Resisting:* White (2010) asserts that, because of colonial laws, the Irish national identity became equated and linked not only to the Irish language but also to Catholicism. The Irish clung to religion not just because of 'faith' but because it represented resistance to British imperial policy and religion. This resistance offered a way of surviving in a state of pride as opposed to humiliation and passivity.

*Constructing the Irish 'Other':* Dreyfus et al. (1982) stressed the importance of looking at each particular history/account in every such analysis and at the way in which power and knowledge are actively used in language and discourses to produce, and justify in retrospect, positions and identities taken up. Colonisation also required its justification (Murray, 2006). As Lloyd (2000) succinctly comments, "*colonial violence is everywhere a racializing violence, producing its antagonists as objects of a biological and cultural judgement of inferiority*" (p.219). Pseudoscientific theories were formed by polygenists who set out to prove the unequal status of races along the evolutionary scale. Concepts of arrested development were combined with evolutionary theory to provide a framework for racial stereotyping (see Knox, 1850). This discourse was transmitted through the scientific community and the media. Lawes (2010) quotes from *The Anthropological Review and Journal* of 1866, which outlines the physical characteristics attributed to the 'Gaelic Man':

*"his bulging jaw and lower part of the face, retreating chin and forehead, large mouth and thick lips, great distance between nose and mouth, upturned nose, prominent cheekbones, sunken eyes, projecting eyebrows, narrow elongated skull and protruding ears".*

This image was juxtaposed with another image of the 'child-like' Irish at the time (Wohl, 1983). The Irish were presented as funny, lighthearted, playful, poetic and highly emotional. English newspapers and journals such as the *Times* and *Punch* presented powerful denigrating images of Irish Catholics (Clarke, 2008). The Irish were made responsible for their own ills, particularly the Famine. Lloyd (2000) asserts that the Irish internalized this belief and recorded their tendency to blame themselves.

These images became the basis of discourses of racialization for centuries. As 'whiteness' was equated with the homogenous colonial way of life, the construction of the Irish as 'inferior' in other ways was found particularly urgent (Hickman et al., 2005). Curtis (1968) cites an extract from a letter by the Cambridge historian Kingsley in 1860:

*"I am haunted by the human chimpanzees I saw [in Ireland] . . . to see white chimpanzees is dreadful; if they were black, one would not feel it so much. . ."*

-Kingsley, quoted in Curtis (1968:84)

The Irish learned that being 'white' had nothing to do with skin 'colour'.

The fact that the Irish approximated the English not only in location but also in skin 'colour' appears to have unsettled English observers. It was as if the perceived 'sameness' was too close for comfort. The colonisers were perhaps faced even more directly with unwanted parts of their own white-skinned selves (Klein, 1964). Constructing a deeper sense of difference, which reached well below the skin, may have become even more vital. Feelings and beliefs regarding the inferiority of the Irish race had to be imprinted deeply and permanently within the psyche of both the coloniser and the colonised. There could be no doubt. Although I may *be seen as* the same as my English counterpart, I never *feel* 'English'. On the contrary, I *feel and automatically think* this difference even more strongly and more disturbingly than any sense of difference I have felt vis-à-vis the dominant cultures of all other countries in which I have temporarily established my home.

*Constructing Irish History:*

*"If the Famine stirred some to angry rhetoric, it would seem to have traumatised others into muteness. The event strains at the limits of the articulable, and is truly in this sense an Irish Auschwitz"*

- Eagleton, T. (1996:13)

The Irish postcolonialist Kiberd (1996) remarks *"the struggle for the power to name oneself and one's state is enacted fundamentally within words, most especially in colonial situations"* (p.615). Ireland and England have still not found the 'neo- or postcolonial relationship' as the colonial history has never been processed in words by either nation (Gibbons, 1998).

In Ireland this silence appears to have worked as a defence at two levels. At one level, this 'will-to-forget' (Gandhi, 1998:4) the past is believed to serve the process of self-invention and of moving on economically and politically. At another, it appears to have had a psychological function. The cultural theorist Gibbons (1996) suggests that such a strategy may have been adopted in Ireland to avoid the painful experiences of guilt, anger, fear and self-hatred that the processing of past trauma and oppression could evoke. McLaughlin (2004) indicates, however, that a remembering, grieving and healing process is necessary for the forging of a new pride and history. Perhaps the fact that despite the strong opposition Ireland has recently, albeit very tentatively, begun to deconstruct its colonial past, this healing process can finally begin (Moane, 2006; Carroll et al., 2003; Flannery, 2009).

From my literature review, it has become apparent that the perceived 'whiteness' of Irish skin has

made incorporating Ireland's postcolonial position into the literature difficult for both postcolonialists and ex-colonists. Postcolonialists have tended to distinguish between the Orient/Occident, East/West, 'black/white' 'race' (Murray, 2006). Ireland is located in Western Europe. The Irish skin is perceived as 'white'. Ireland was colonized and is still divided. This not only poses many challenging questions about the basic ideology and discourse theories of postcolonial works but also threatens the colonial 'truth' vis-à-vis the myth of 'white' homogeneity (Hickman et al., 1995; Allen 1998; Cleary, 2003).

## **2.2 The Postcolonial Relationship: Psychological Effects of the Trauma of Colonialism and the Great Famine**

The Irish psychologist Moane (1994) recounts the 'vehement' resistance she met in Ireland to her endeavour to reconstruct and examine psychological legacies of Irish colonial history. The blatant paucity of psychological studies exploring the long-lasting psychic effects of an Irish colonial history bears testimony to her experiences. Moane (1999) points out, however, that such silence and denial are legacies of an oppressive history. I have shown above that centuries-long colonisation leaves its mark both intrapsychically and interpersonally (McKenzie-Mavinga, 2005; Alleyne, 2006; Tuckwell, 2002). The colonisation of Ireland, Moane argues, is similarly accompanied by all the "*marks of oppression arising from trauma, dispossession, defeat*" as well as "*collusion, betrayal, apathy and self-interest*" (Moane, 2006:10).

Within the Irish context, Moane (2006) points out that Irish literature bears witness to how "*emotions and experiences become distorted over generations, developing concepts such as displaced anger, malignant shame or survivor guilt*"(p.10). Poets and Irish writers such as Bourke et al. (2002); Brown (2009); Boland (1990); O'Tuama et al. (1981); McCourt (2001) and Kinealy (1995) consider the loss, sorrow, anger and despairing helplessness arising from this period.

In constructing a possible narrative regarding the psychological impact the colonial period may continue to have on the Irish-in-relationship, I have borrowed concepts from a number of sources, including the trauma and postcolonial traditions. I also draw on some of the very few theories posited on the subject by writers in the area of psychology, e.g. Gavin (2001), Lloyd (2000), Greenslade (1992) and Kenny (1985).

### **2.2.1 Transgenerational Trauma**

*"We are from the past, but we echo and reverberate in the present. What a responsibility!...  
We, you and I, must remember everything. We must especially remember those things we  
never knew."*

-Jimmie Durham (Cherokee artist)(1993:147)

The fifth edition of the American Psychiatric Association's *Diagnostic and Statistical Manual of Mental Disorders* (2013) defines individual posttraumatic stress in presentations in which the client meets one or more of the following requirements: directly experiences the traumatic event, witnesses the traumatic event in person, has learned that the traumatic event occurred to a close family member or close friend or experienced first-hand repeated or extreme indirect exposure to aversive details of the traumatic event. Bombay et al. (2009) have identified what they refer to as collective traumatic events, which "*can be directed at groups based on political, racial, religious, or cultural beliefs, and can be as random as single natural disasters or those purposely conducted for an extended period*" (p.22). One such event is that of Colonisation. Transgenerational trauma relates to the process by which these traumatic experiences are transmitted through following generations (Levine, 2001). Children learn to experience the trauma through their parents intergenerationally transmitted coping mechanisms (depression, anger, alcohol abuse) and learn to respond similarly (Coll et al., 2012). Writers on the psychological legacies of trauma experienced by Native American peoples speak of "*Historical Trauma*" or "*soul wound*" in describing present-day manifestations of such events vis-à-vis health issues. Such transmission is witnessed in Whitbeck et al.'s (2004) work with Native Americans, which finds that massive trauma emerges several generations following the original devastating tragedy.

Payrhuber (2011) describes in his accounts, based on clinical case studies, how traumatic collective experiences become represented in the psyche in the form of meaningful images of perpetrator/victim. Although this work focuses on the trauma of the Holocaust, I have found the insights also help me in my conceptualization of the Irish-English relational dynamics. For example, Payrhuber (2012) outlines the individual and collective impact which transgenerationally transmitted trauma can have on subsequent generations: biological changes affecting parenting and attachment styles (Barocas et al., 1980; Bar-One et al., 1998); emotional styles of alexithymia, denial, depression, mistrust, anxiety, guilt, shame, anger; propensity to develop PTSD; depression, suicidal behaviour and ideation (Walls et al., 2007; Yoder et al., 2006); unconscious relational dynamics (identifications, transference/countertransference, fantasies, nightmares, etc.). What I found particularly interesting in light of the silence that appears to overshadow Ireland's colonial past is Payrhuber's (2011) description of how the trauma is transmitted intergenerationally within a 'conspiracy of silence' (Danieli, 1998), i.e. in the form of a wordless collective communication pattern through parenting and social practices and unconscious communication, e.g. 'keep your head down'. This pattern develops to defend against the memories and against their associated unmourned, unprocessed emotions. Most importantly, they function in protecting against any show of anger, which may in turn lead to retaliation (Payrhuber, 2011). The trauma is internalized and represented in following generations both intrapsychically and interpersonally. Fragmented affects remain without words buried in the psychic realm, together with the horrors of the original trauma.

The trauma thus unresolved is passed from one generation to the next, leading to a 'soul wound' (Duran et al., 2006). This trauma is "*not only passed on intergenerationally but it is cumulative... unresolved trauma becomes more severe...*" (Duran et al., 2006:4). The failure to heal the wound leads to psychological consequences, e.g. internalisation of the oppressor, unresolved grief and mourning, and suicidality (Brave Heart, 2000). Payrhuber (2011) maintains that these intrapsychic dynamics feed into the co-constructed relational worlds of therapy.

The psychotherapist Kenny (1985) was one of the first writers to locate the relationship between the English and Irish within a broader colonial framework incorporating concepts from the trauma literature. Kenny draws on Gregory Bateson's theory of cultural difference in psychological development in doing so. He presents the cultural relationship between England and Ireland as complementary and enmeshed, one of domination and submission. The colonizer exerted power and the repeatedly defeated Irish looked on full of the shame, guilt, anger and a growing sense of failure and inferiority. The Irish became helpless and dependent. The English emerged as the rescuing care-givers (e.g. soup kitchens during the Famine). Kenny suggests that these patterns of oppression were then internalized as 'self-oppressing' blueprints by the Irish. The colonized are destined to always see themselves through the colonizers' lens. Kenny uses Kelly's (1955) concept of 'constriction' to describe how the complementary relationship is dealt with psychologically. Following a cycle of repeated defeat, the colonized world becomes chaotic and confusing. In order to survive, a certain rigid communication style is developed in interaction with the colonizer. Kenny (1985) describes the main aspects of this communication style, which is indicative of social withdrawal: superficial compliancy (pleasing, splitting internal and externally, conforming to one's own group, e.g. religion); indirect communication (e.g. answering question with a question); avoidance of self-revelation (also needs and wishes); and elaboration of the inner world (fantasy, poetry, etc.) A personal withdrawal accompanies the social: focus on inner world, helplessness and dependency, elaboration of negative self (introjected from oppressor). Both on a personal and national level, choice is continuously narrowed down. Kenny sees this process as indicative of a trauma reaction at an individual level: rigidity, constriction, withdrawal from environment while still living in it and then from self through suicide. Kenny stresses the importance of reversing the constriction process to allow dilation and individuation.

Lloyd (2000) similarly compares the processes involved in the collective trauma of Irish colonisation with that of individual trauma of childhood abuse. Drawing on the writings of the trauma expert Herman (1992), he argues that the processes and psychological effects are identical in both cases. The victim is rendered powerless by the more powerful perpetrator. Control and meaning are lost, as horror and subjugation take hold. Both body and mind freeze and constrict in a desperate attempt to survive. The powerless subject is transformed into the object of the Other. Lloyd (2000) notes the symptoms which, he asserts, manifest themselves in both individual and

collective trauma: *"desire to forget, dissociation which often leads to fragmentation, and a sense of the 'unspeakableness' of the trauma which becomes a wordless reality"* (p.214). He suggests that the subject of the victim disappears in a new, meaning-laden relational world, which is that of an-Other.

### 2.2.2 Colonial Mimicry and False Selves

In the trauma literature, the defensive strategy of suppressing memories defended against the pain of trauma and further violations. This strategy may also have facilitated an adaptation to the invader in the colony during the colonial period. Often referred to as 'mimicry', such adaptation was encouraged and often enforced by the colonizer.

Bhabha (1994) speaks of a colonial mimicry in which, in order to maintain order and control, 'mimic men' are 'made' due to *"the (colonizer's) desire for a reformed, recognizable other, as a subject of a difference that is almost the same but not quite"* (p. 86). The colonized thus becomes like the colonizer but still remains the 'Other', the small difference being between *"being English and being Anglicized"* (p.90), *"a social reality which is at once 'other' and yet entirely knowable and visible"* (pp.70-1). This, Bhabha suggests, takes place at both communal and individual levels.

Kitron (2001) uses Winnicott's (1965) concept of the overly compliant false self in his depiction of this 'mimicry' in the Irish context. A false self, he contends, is actively developed by the colonized as a defensive manoeuvre. This self pseudoidentifies with the enemy on an individual as well as a collective level. It negotiates with the present reality, i.e. the colonizer, as a means of survival. Kitron (2001) concludes that, *"all that is real and all that is personal and original and creative is hidden, and gives no sign of its existence"* (p.80). In the process of adapting and developing a false self, the colonized have to fine-tune their empathic skills to 'know thy enemy'. A very complex system of projection and projective identification seems to be spun, a type of splitting. The ubiquity of the false self protects the authentic self but can lead to self-disorders. The split in the mind is believed by some to lead to schizophrenic experiencing (Thomas 2013). The split remains as long as the words have not been found to 'know' it (Herman, 1992).

Greenslade's (1992) theory is embedded in a social psychological perspective and conceptualizes the process of 'mimicry' in terms of choice. Greenslade (1992) applies a theory of the colonized mind developed by Fanon (1967). He describes how the dominant colonial language infiltrates the colonized with the foreign culture in their own country. The Irish in the face of the existential question 'Who am I?' have a choice: take the English culture on and identify or resist and remain cut off from modernity in the 'historical backwater' (Greenslade, 1992:212).

If one decides to identify, negative relational emotions, e.g. anger, are forbidden and have to be suppressed. This anger then becomes caught up in the body (Coogan, 1980). The colonized thus continue to experience colonisation and with that their own powerlessness. They envy the

colonizer's power and wish to identify with it. Forced to give up their own identity to become like the colonizer, an internal dichotomy takes shape. One's own culture is devalued and rejected in favour of that of the colonizer and the positive qualities of the Other are juxtaposed with negative qualities of the self. Both identities are never whole and always opposing. In striving to adapt to the 'ideal' image of the hated colonizer, the colonized are always aware that this is something they will never be. The internalized ideal is always in conflict with its imperfect 'other' self counterpart (Young-Bruehl, 1996). Memmi reflects in his words the intrapsychic conflict which rages within the colonized: *"How could he hate the colonizers and yet admire them so passionately? (I too felt this admiration in spite of myself)"* (Memmi, 1965:x). I struggled equally with such a conflict.

## 2.3 In the Colonial Heartland: The Irish in England

Emigration has been part of life in Ireland since the colonial period (Greenslade, 1992). In the 2001 census, the Irish minority ethnic group made up the largest and oldest ethnic minority in the UK. In England and Wales, the number has dropped up to 2011 due to deaths and returnees to Ireland following the economic upturn. Following the death of the so-called Celtic tiger<sup>11</sup> the numbers of Irish-born leaving for the United Kingdom are, however, expected to increase once again (Tilki, 2006). The research shows that living in England has taken its toll on the mental health of the general Irish immigrant population, a finding that has remained unacknowledged in the English context.

### 2.3.1 Inequalities Identified in the Mental Health Data

*"It is evidently not the case that the Irish have been invisible within research on minorities, but rather that research findings remain uninterpreted or overlooked, when compared with other minorities, and are consistently ignored when it comes to policy initiatives"*

-Walls (2001)

Walls (2001) concluded from her review of research data collected during the 1980s/1990s that first- and second-generation Irish in England have, relative to the rest of the population, consistently worse health. The ICAP<sup>12</sup> mental health statistics (2011) show that the 'Irish' are the only immigrant group whose physical and mental health deteriorates on settling in England. The 'Irish' are shown to *"have rates of mental distress well above those for any other migrant group (except for psychosis rates in the African-Caribbean population)..."* Greenslade (1992) noted this to be the case despite the apparent advantages of 'whiteness', proximity to native country and the

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<sup>11</sup> The Celtic tiger refers to a period of rapid economic growth in the Republic of Ireland between 1995 and 2000 which slowed down somewhat in the period up to 2008. Thereafter the economy fell into recession.

<sup>12</sup> Immigrant Counselling and Psychotherapy.

English language. This trend was found to persist after controlling for socioeconomic factors (Sproston et al., 2002). Studies carried out by Leavey et al. (2007), Nazroo (1997a) and Bracken et al. (1998) support these findings. Raftery et al. (1990) show that the trend persists into the second generation and Harding et al. (1996) that Irish rates are similar across all social classes. Harding et al. (2001) show that the trend persists into the third generation.

High rates of self-harm have been documented (Burke, 1976; Merrill et al. 1988) as have high rates of suicide and attempted suicide (Neeleman et al., 1997). Rates of attempted suicide have been found to be higher among Irish-born in England than in Ireland (Burke, 1976; Merrill et al. 1988). This high rate of suicide was also evident in second-generation Irish (Harding et al. (1996). Leavey (1999) shows that adjusting for social class explains practically none of the excess suicide rate among men. Walls (1996) found that among Irish-born men, the rate of hospitalization for depression is nearly triple that of white, British-born men and the rate for Irish-born women is two-and-a-half times higher than that of white, British-born women. The data indicate the severity of the problem, but the reasons behind the poor psychological health of the Irish in England remain only partially understood (Clucas, 2009). Walls (2001) notes: *"To date, neither social class position nor health behaviours can adequately explain these patterns. Other possible explanations sought in (usually, stereotypes of) Irish culture and selection theories have lain unsubstantiated"*.

The urgent need to consider the Irish group in English mental health structures is not reflected in social work and policy where *"there has been an embedded failure to recognize the specificity of Irish people"*(Garrett, 2004:1). Sproston et al. (2002) conclude that a distinct lack of services available to the Irish puts and keeps them at a significant risk of developing a mental health concern, i.e. as opposed to other 'visible' ethnic minorities.

Bracken et al. (2001) assert that: *"The historiographic legacy has left British health research unable, or unwilling, to follow the logic of its own statistical material and explore the Irish dimension"* (p.49). Even when the health research findings led to their recognition within the scope of the Race Relations Act of 1996, there did not exist a discourse which allowed further exploration (Walls, 2001).

As outlined above, the 'white' Irish ethnic minority appears to pose a problem to the dominant 'black/white' paradigm for understanding race/ethnicity in England. This discourse informs all policy regarding resource allocation (Hickman et al., 1997; Tilki et al. 2009). Due to the myth of 'white homogeneity', the Irish continue to remain 'outside' the public discourse on ethnicity and thus largely ignored by the debates, the literature and policy decisions. Hickman et al. (1995) also showed that the Irish were reluctant to complain. This was particularly the case following the 1974 Prevention of Terrorism Act due to their allocated status as 'suspect people' and the stereotypes of



the 'Irish terrorist' held by the police, media and general public. Gavin (2001) describes the adopted collective strategy to *"keep their heads down and their mouths shut"* (p.216).

Tilki et al. (2009) conclude that the data show that Irish people are doubly marginalised. On the one hand, their specific problems are largely unacknowledged by service providers on the grounds of 'whiteness' and, on the other, stereotypes of Irish people still abound and impact negatively on their health care.

### *Anti-Irish Racism*

Walls (2006) indicates that the tendency to focus on the 'black-white divide' in cultural studies generally may be due to a *"British policy focus on 'visible' minorities (which) has tended to imply that being white-skinned is a protection against any form of prejudice, hostility and discrimination"* (p.23). Hickman et al., (1995) have found, however, that the *"'white' Irish continue to be racialized as inferior and alien Others"* (p.5) and continue to undergo discriminatory experiences similar to other ethnic groups (Hickman et al., 1997). A wealth of literature describes Irish experiences of exclusion vis-à-vis employment, housing, the criminal justice system, policing, social life and the health service (Wilson et al., 1999; Walls, 2006; Thomas, 2013; Clucas, 2009; Connor, 1987, Lennon et al., 1998, Mooney et al., 1999; Doolin, 1994; Tilki, 1994). Within the mental health service, Wilson et al. (1999) found that, along with 'black' ethnic groups, the Irish-born are the most likely to be detained in locked psychiatric wards and to be treated with higher dosages of medication. Commander et al. (1999) presented evidence that Irish men are more likely to be diagnosed as alcoholic by British psychiatrists as a result of ethnic stereotyping<sup>13</sup>.

In the interactional space, the Irish are often subjected to anti-Irish jokes and discrimination based on accent, name and use of Hiberno-English (O'Keefe, 2003). Both Tilki (1998) and Williams et al., (2003) associate such discrimination with poor mental health. Anti-Irish racism is traced back to colonialism and has been shown to still exist, albeit in more subtle forms (Hickman et al., 1997; Clucas, 2009; Walls, 2006).

Jokes, for example, have been conceptualized repeatedly as a channel for covert racist communication. Lentin cites Bhabha (1998:xvi) who, in line with Freudian thought, conceptualizes jokes as the *"unconscious (speaking) in the psychopathology of everyday life"* (Lentin 1999:8). They show how the target is seen. The sociologists Clucas (2009), Walls (2006) and Hickman et al., (1995) reported multiple accounts of participants' confrontations with anti-Irish stereotypes and jokes. Clucas (2009) cautions that the Irish may internalize the associated images and integrate them into their own self-concept, as suggested above (Kiberd, 1992; Greenslade, 1992). This, she concludes,

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<sup>13</sup> Littlewood et al. (1982) outline further racialized stereotypes which have found their way into the realm of English psychiatry.

will inevitably have negative implications for mental health. Unfortunately, a broad tolerance of derogatory Irish jokes in England has been identified (Hickman et al., 1995).

Racism based on audibility has also been identified. Hickman et al. (1997) identified mimicry as “*a legitimate form of amusement*” (p.193) in England. Indeed, in the English context, I have often had to tolerate my accent being imitated and made fun of in interaction with English Others. This experiencing shifted me into a place of shame and silenced me. In her exploration of ‘Whitely Scripts’, Gray (2002) worked with Irish women who emigrated to England in the 1980s. Her participants recount shameful experiences of being corrected in their grammar and pronunciation by their English counterparts. She refers to Walter (1995) who described the power/knowledge structure associated with ‘standard English’, which Gray observed is “*counterposed by assumptions of Irish stupidity and such characteristics as alcoholism and terrorism*” (p.265).

### 2.3.2 The Irish Response: Being Through An-Other?

*“As long as a black man is among his own, he will have no occasion, except in minor internal conflicts, to experience his being through others”*

-Fanon (2000:257)

Berry (2005) identified four states of immigrant acculturation: integration (both original and dominant cultures valued), separation (own culture values and dominant devalued), assimilation (dominant culture valued but own culture devalued) and marginalization (both cultures are devalued). The ideal state of acculturation, according to Berry et al. (1997), is that of integration. The Irish Ministry of Foreign Affairs published a report in 2002 which concluded, however, that Irish integration in England is much less successful than in other countries. Grinberg et al. (1989) suggest that emigration generally “*constitutes a catastrophic change insofar as certain structures are exchanged for other and the changes entail periods of disorganization, pain and frustration*” (p.70). I wondered how Irish immigrants managed psychologically, given that the structures in which they now found themselves are those of the colonizer.

Greenslade (1992) described Irish immigrants to England as holding a ‘fragile’ identity, which, lacking the context of resistance in Ireland, is now constantly confronted with its own inferiority through the encounter with the ex-colonizing Other and their perfection. Clarke (2008) suggests that the fact that the skin colour is the same deepens the sense of inferiority in relation to intellect and other internalized self-perceptions. Clucas (2009) found that, for many, first-generation Irish Catholics continued to provide some support structure in England and suggests that religion provided the containment required to adapt to the English Other. This was not the case with second-generation Irish who appear to have rejected and rebelled against Catholicism (Hickman,

2005). Gavin (2001) suggests that first-generation Irish, on the other hand, appeared to use Catholicism's structures to organize the internal world of repressed desires, e.g. anger. Instead of expressing anger, it is endured and sacrificed or 'offered up' and transformed into a form of martyrdom (Gavin, 2001).

Greenslade (1992) contends that in the ex-colonizer's homeland and in the face of the discrimination, stereotyping and racism evidenced in the above section, many Irish immigrants appear forced to either become more like the colonist and acceptable to him or attempt to disappear within their own community, which is never 100% possible. The immigrant will tend to internalize and promote the ex-colonizer's image of the positive 'inoffensive' side while suppressing the images of the negative 'threatening' side to avoid confrontation and survive. This suppression and ambivalence can never lead to a stable identity because the internalizations are forever in combat with each other and with the original identity. No authentic identity can be established and integration remains impossible (Clucas, 2009; Leavey et al., 2007; Hickman, 2005; Walter, 2006; Leavey et al., 2007). This is an important point to bear in mind when working with Irish clients as the inability to form a coherent and positive sense of identity has been found to have negative effects for psychological health (Abbu-Rayya, 2006). Greenslade (1992) cautions that such psychic fragmentation can lead to schizophrenic symptomology in vulnerable immigrants. Leavey (1999) suggests that this state could be an explanation for the high rates of suicide and attempted suicide found in the Irish group.

In the case of the second-generation, the task of establishing a coherent identity proves particularly problematic due to rejection from both Ireland and England. Hickman (2005) noted that Ireland rejects these 'hybrids' or 'plastic paddies' as not Irish and in fact English (due to birthplace and accent). England "*cannot tolerate any dilution of whiteness or weakening of the hegemonic domain and they also insist on their Englishness*" (p. 177) while discriminating against them on the basis of their Irishness. An integrated identity thus remains elusive for many first- and second-generation Irish.

## **2.4 The White English Therapist's Countertransferential Response?**

As I have suggested above, the major theoretical approaches to therapy in the United Kingdom today appear not to recognise the broader cultural, socioeconomic and political dimensions in their therapeutic work. Transculturalists are currently endeavouring to highlight the danger of being party to unintentional racism and oppressive practice in continuing to exclude the broader field in the conceptualization of their work <sup>14</sup> (Lago, 2011; Tuckwell, 2002; Ryde, 2011). Training institutions continue to exclude the broader context in training and supervision or include it as an 'add-on' rather than an integrated piece. The incorporation of these dimensions into a

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<sup>14</sup> To date, however, the focus has been on therapeutic work across the 'black/white skin' divide.

conceptualization of the therapeutic work remains in the hands of the individual practitioner (Tuckwell, 2002). Many writers in the area are finding psychodynamics concepts traditionally used in one-to-one interactions useful in conceptualizing broader intraethnic and interethnic processes (Tuckwell, 2002; Alleyne, 2006; McKenzie-Mavinga, 2002). However, Tuckwell (2002) notes that there is little available literature in counselling psychology examining the cultural transference in white-white dyads.

Nevertheless, writers who have turned their attention to the Irish-English dyad, such as Greenslade (1992) and Kenny (1985), have indeed applied central psychodynamic concepts such as transference/countertransference processes and projection, splitting, introjection and projective identification mechanisms. They suggest that the 'white' Irish group, in adapting to the colonizer, introjects the colonizer's demands, image of the ideal colonizer/inferior colonized as well as identifying with the colonizer's projections. This complex forms the organizing structure around which the colonized organises the 'true' self. On the other hand, the colonizer internalizes a construct of the colonized as 'inferior' and a container of split-off and unwanted characteristics. This construct is similarly used in the organization of the self. These internalizations lead to a myriad of assumptions and internal relational conflictual dynamics. They become integrated into expectations ('pre-transference') and accompany both parties on entering relationships (Curry, 1964). Passed down through the generations, these patterns also provide the affective blueprints for the relationship in the here-and-now of the therapy room where the colonial relationship may be enacted in unacknowledged, subtle and unknown ways (Gerson, 2004; Payrhuber, 2012). These transgenerational relational patterns have been referred to variously in the transcultural/multicultural literature as (ethno)cultural transference and (ethno)cultural countertransference<sup>15</sup> and represent a fractal of broader social dynamics (Ridley, 1995; Comas-Diaz et al., 1991).

Gavin (2001), drawing on her own clinical experience in England, reflects on how issues of Irish identity and difference manifest themselves in various group therapy settings. She identified a process of cultural transference/countertransference that repeatedly arose in her group sessions. She hypothesizes that, in the presence of the 'ex-colonizer', the ex-colonized may slip easily into the position of the inferior. The colonizer, in an unconscious response, may find themselves enacting old stereotypical roles (subjugation, succour, advice, paternal role). They may find themselves unconsciously compensating for past misdoings, feeling personally responsible or may become angry, ashamed, guilty, confused. Both parties attempt to deny uncomfortable feelings by avoiding the theme of their differences in protecting themselves. Difference emerging in a culturally diverse group interaction was collectively denied by the group. In answer to discriminatory remarks, the

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<sup>15</sup> The intersubjectivist Maroda (1991) defines transference "*as the conscious and unconscious responses – both affective and cognitive – of the patient to the therapist*" and in "*parallel fashion, the countertransference - as the conscious and unconscious responses of the therapist to the patient*" (Maroda, 1991:66).

Irish rushed in to identify their commonalities and downplay the differences with the offender. Gavin (2001) understands this as a form of reaction formation,<sup>16</sup> hindering acknowledgement and processing of difference together. The foundational cultural relational material continues to be avoided.

Within the therapy room, the transference and countertransference are considered equally important. Although two interacting realities exist in the room, creating a system of reciprocal mutual influence (Stolorow et al., 1987; Berman, 2000), it is the therapist's responsibility to identify, hold and use them in the client's interest (Maroda, 1991). Countertransference is considered to be the source of all empathy in therapy (Tansey et al., 1989). As empathy has been shown to be central to the success of therapy (Rogers, 1957), therapists' knowledge of a broad range of their own countertransference responses becomes paramount. The self-psychologists consider empathy as a temporary regression on the part of the therapist, insofar as s/he merges mindfully and temporarily into the other person in order to understand him/her (Kohut, 1977). Countertransference responses are the entry point into the client's world.

Within psychodynamic literature, countertransference is considered to be a crucial source of information that can be used as a tool to research the client's unconscious (Heimann, 1950; Winnicott, 1975; Gabbard, 1995). Countertransference may be a reaction to a client's invitation to enter a transference or proactive arising from the therapist's own dynamics. In both cases, it manifests itself in intense, powerful, uncomfortable, seemingly irrational emotions (Maroda, 1998). As it can be as much about the therapist's 'stuff' as that of the client in this co-constructed dynamic relationship, it must be managed with care (Kahn, 1997; DeYoung, 2003; Stolorow et al., 1987). When the therapist's own unidentified assumptions and unresolved conflicts intrude into the work, it can be disastrous. It can blind therapists to important areas of exploration or cause them to focus on areas related to their own issues (Kahn, 1997). Therapists' *"deep characterological, habitual responses"* are a *"trap to be looked for vigilantly"* (Kahn, 1997:121/132). Racker (1968) warns that *"we are still children and neurotics even when we are adults and analysts"* (p.130). It is the responsibility of therapists to remain one step ahead of the client by endeavouring to know themselves, their assumptions vis-à-vis the client and their own pathology and to be mindful of how this affects their work. If, for example, the therapist is not aware of his own internalized intercultural dynamics, the transgenerationally transmitted cultural relationship may be reenacted and the client retraumatized. Both the client and the therapist will have feelings within the relationship; the difference is in the way the therapist experiences and uses them (Heimann, 1950).

Transculturalists in the United Kingdom today stress the importance of integrating the broader context into training across the board. They also emphasize the need for supervisors to always keep

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<sup>16</sup> Defence mechanism where unacceptable, anxiety-provoking emotions/impulses are masked by an exaggerated form of the opposite emotions/impulses.

in mind the cultural background to all presentations. To date, these recommendations have been mostly framed within a postcolonial discourse of ethnic difference along the 'black/white skin' divide (Ryde, 2011; Tuckwell, 2002; Hawkins et al., 2006). I asked myself as I finished the literature review how the transgenerationally transmitted cultural relationship in the 'white' Irish-English dyad is conceptualized? How are the transference/countertransference processes managed and used? Could something be missed?

## 2.5 Overview

An overview of the literature review to date leads back to the dilemma and missing piece that I intuited at the beginning of my research process:

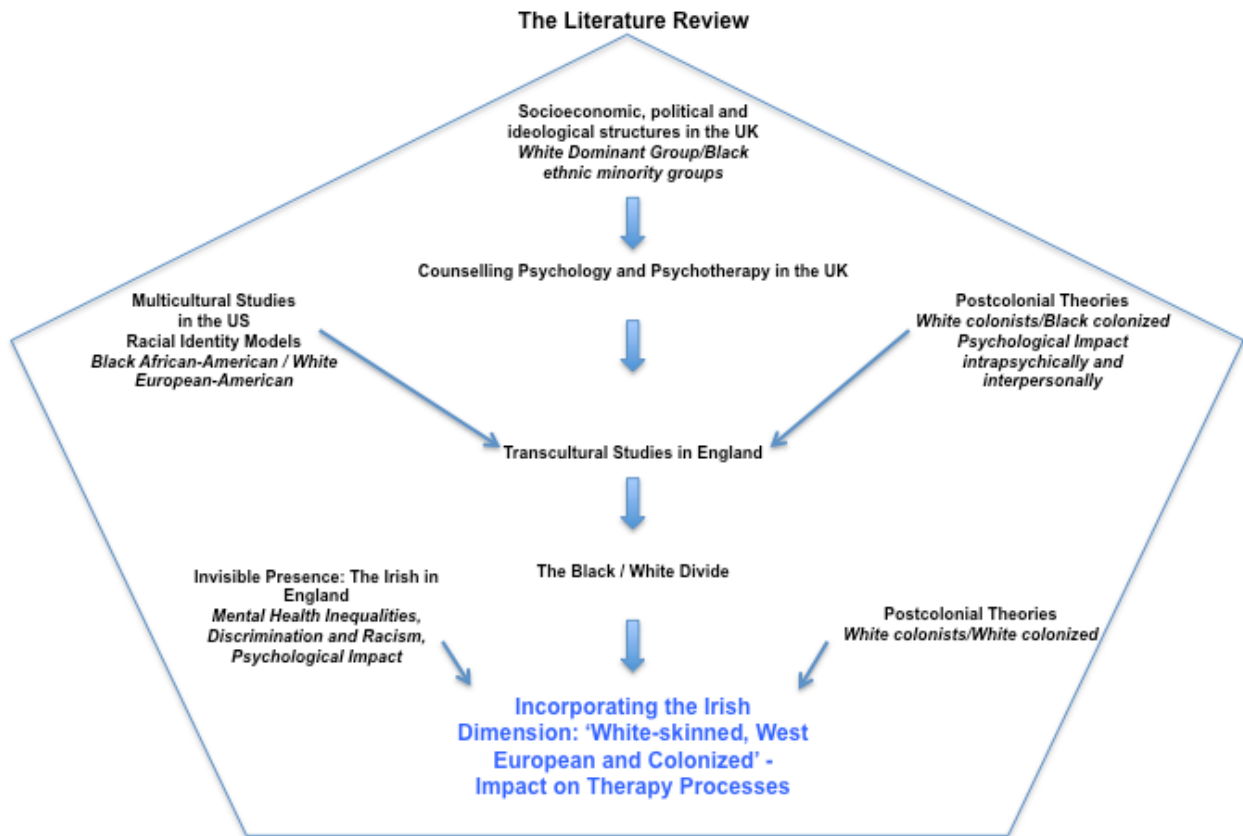


Fig. 2.2 The Literature Review

## **2.6 Research Question**

In taking a first step of my own in ascertaining what may be missed by the literature and the research to date, I decided to explore, make-meaning and construct a theory on what is happening on the ground in the interpersonal interactional process of the therapeutic relationship comprising a 'white' Irish client and a white English therapist/counsellor, from a client perspective. My aim in asking the question was the development of a potential theory and model of understanding for counselling psychologists and psychotherapists. My research question was:

**How, in an English context, is the therapeutic work between a 'white' Irish client and a white English therapist/counsellor conceptualized or understood.**

- a. How do 'white' Irish clients experience their interactions with white English therapists/counsellors?**
- b. To what extent and in what ways are these experiences linked to colonial history and cultural difference?**

Within a cooperative inquiry group, I aimed to openly and fluidly explore what may exist within the gap, which the literature review above highlights. Thereafter, I aimed to organize a workshop with white English therapists/counsellors in which to dialogue around the emerging themes.



*Reflections on my emotional journey:* My journey through the literature was an uneasy one. It threw me into an unexpected whirlwind of emotion. I was confronted with long-suppressed childhood memories. I came, for example, once again face-to-face with the shame I experienced on observing adults I loved dearly modifying accents and behaviour in the company of members of our large landowning neighbours, the Irish Protestant ascendancy. They never really succeeded in hiding their accents, in masking their Catholic Irishness. This cultural self always showed itself. In retrospect, I acknowledge an anger I felt in these situations, perhaps towards my loved ones for not being 'perfect' in their attempt to be the 'same', or perhaps because I felt they were betraying who we were. However, most of all I believe I was angry because these interactions simply made me feel inexplicably uncomfortable and ashamed. Many of these relatives are now dead. I have never had the opportunity to process all these emotions with them, unintegrated emotions which have been sitting with me for all these years and which have, I believe, impacted on relationships with those I held so dear.

During my exploration through the literature, I was filled with a familiar anger in reading historical documents dealing with the English colonisation of Ireland. This anger was similar to that which erupted in me as a schoolchild engaging with my history. I felt it deep in my stomach, but I had never voiced it. That just wasn't done. It was frowned upon. Such anger was associated with Republican and Unionist violence. It felt dangerous.

Additionally, during the literature review, I was deeply saddened by the new insights I attained into the effects of transgenerational trauma. This sadness was accompanied by a sense of relief. My emotional world vis-à-vis my Irish self began to make sense. Nevertheless, I continued to be shocked by the inequalities identified in the mental health data and frustrated by the lack of interest shown by mental health professionals and governmental institutions in engaging with the issue. This anger and frustration I now believe fired my drive to take on this project, despite that old nagging fear that I may be scorned or punished for doing so. I convinced myself that, as an adult, I could deal with this given the necessary support. It did feel like a personal rebellion, perhaps. I had something to say and I needed to say it! However, the unexpected and overwhelming sadness accompanying the process often deadened that same fire, particularly during the interactions I had with my participants. It was the sadness which caused me the most trouble.

The literature supported me in beginning to piece together a bigger picture. It gave some meaning to the myriad of emotions I was experiencing in the English interactional context. I began to understand the silence I faced in any attempt to verbalise my thoughts and emotions. I reflected on how it was easier for me to dare speak the unspeakable. I was not living or working in England. I did not have to engage interactions with English counterparts on a daily basis. I did not have to constantly fear discrimination and racism on the basis of my Irishness. I could move out of this English context and safely engage with the emotional turmoil I was experiencing in England from a safe distance in Dubai and Germany. Although this process was painful, I felt it was contained to a large extent by this distance. It was as if my

flights between the two worlds provided me with a transitional space in which I could integrate my experiences and gain another perspective on what was happening. Had I not had that space, would I have gone down this exploratory research path? Perhaps not. This space was for me an essential resource as I journeyed through the process. I believe, however, that the methodology I chose and the support network I built around me in terms of supervision and friends provided the bridge and grounding needed to avoid falling into an ever-present emotional quicksand of shame, anger, fear and, most especially, the deep sorrow which accompanied the process. Awareness of my own emotional journey throughout the process also made me more sensitive and mindful of the emotional challenges that my participants may be facing in joining me. I ensured I provided space for the processing of any emotional pieces whenever I succeeded in identifying them in our dialogues. This necessitated a deep engagement with my own bodily and affective process.

### 3 METHODOLOGY

#### 3.1 Philosophical Underpinnings

The methodology used to address a research question and justify the findings is the fundamental choice faced in any research process (McLeod, 1999). Willig (2001) points out that this process depends on the researcher's epistemological and ontological stance. Epistemologically and ontologically, I sit with a social constructionist perspective (Gergen, 1985).

Knowledge I consider subjective and truth relative. I place the ontological emphasis in my work on the clients' and participants' 'being-in-the-world', i.e. on their interpreted subjective experiences (Heidegger, 1962). I share West's (2002) criticism of positivism's claim to objectivity and his assertion that just as therapy cannot be objectified, neither can the research process in exploring therapy. I believe that any event comprises many equally valid subjective truths which may be modified within the multitude of dynamic and fluid co-constructed realities in which we act. All phenomena and knowledges are located in the complexity of history, space, time and in fluid, ever-changing contexts.

However, in line with Evans (2007), I reject the inherent nihilism associated with a more extreme postmodernist position suggesting that all realities in which we live are merely constructed and unknowable. I believe, in line with critical realists such as Bhaskar (1989), that our worlds are framed by greater, relatively stable social structures which act as if they are real and to which we unquestioningly adapt automatically. These powerful socio-culturally-bound and constructed realities, e.g. political structures, academic pillars, histories, categorizations can endure over longer periods of time and become crystallized, functioning practically as the 'truth' and holding the power to influence each individual's subjective experience often at a very deep level (Bruner, 1990). The foundation of these greater structures can, however, give way when we become aware of the agendas they serve and alternatives or when put under scrutiny in the course of an inquiry.

In my role of practitioner-researcher, I do not claim objectivity nor do I believe the research can be value-free (Prillensky et al., 2002). I aim to maintain a reflective stance and a sceptical eye but am ever mindful of how comfortable it feels to remain blind to such seemingly legitimate 'real' structures. I acknowledge that there may be societal, cultural and historical factors, lying beyond my conscious awareness, which influence my own experience and those of my participants.

Following on from this, I believe that any piece of research produces 'a' truth, which is co-constructed in the symbolic interaction (Mead, 1934) between the researcher and the participant in a particular context and at a particular time but against a wider, influential "*virtual or historical reality*" (Guba et al., 1994:110). This one truth can be included into a larger cyclical research process, which may result in one possible theory, from the researcher's individual perspective,

emerging from the many subjective truths identified in the particular set of data under study.

This exploration was driven by my belief that, as a relational practitioner-researcher, ascertaining *meanings* given to the totality of clients'/participants' human experiencing in *all* their various life-worlds (intrapyschic, interpersonal and contextual) is central. These various meanings I assume emerge in the mutually influential interaction between our individual subjectivities. Like Sullivan (1953), I believe that the intrapsychic relational blueprints developed in the interpersonal space of earlier development, together with the associated beliefs, emotions, sensations and actions, will be activated in *"the complex field that is created when two or more individuals with their unique subjectivities come together"* (Buirski et al., 2001:4), *"in which (the) individual subjectivity is articulated and communicated"* (Frie et al., 2005:3). This articulation and communication is embedded in history and time (Stolorow et al., 2001). Thus, in working with research participants over time, I assume I gain insight into this intrapsychic process in the intersubjective space of our present-day interaction. Our individual, collectively formed subjectivities unfold and become open to reflection in interaction.

My motivation in carrying out this piece of research was also deeply rooted in a critical, ideological axiology and a strong desire for social justice, as well as a desire to confront issues of oppression. I intuited that an injustice was being carried out in the manner in which 'white' Irish immigrants to England were being met in many contexts but specifically in the area of counselling psychology. It appeared to me that 'white' Irish immigrant clients were being excluded from the dominant discourse on difference and disempowered by being assigned to categories with which they may not identify. In my conversations with both 'white' Irish clients and white English therapists/counsellors, a discrepancy emerged between how both groups understood their cultural relationship. The Irish counterparts identified themselves as culturally 'different' to their English counterparts, whereas the English therapist/counsellors asserted a 'sameness' between both groups due to a perceived common 'whiteness'. The English therapist's counselling training had not questioned such an assumption. The clients' voice appeared to have been muted in counselling psychology discourses and lost in a general tendency to define 'difference' in terms of skin colour, as well as the widespread practice of examining constructs as opposed to their underlying generative processes.

In my view, psychology is always political despite any claims of its neutrality (Cromby et al., 2011). The act of excluding a group from a political discourse is itself a political action in my eyes, and it will have repercussions. In line with Kindon et al, (2007), I thus believe that research not only relates to data collection and analysis but also to 'learning, empowering and action'. It was important for me that the knowledge produced could be used and acted on in changing not only practice but the discourses informing that practice.

I was aware of my need to delve into what the relational experience was like for the 'white' Irish client in this particular context. I believed such a description of client experience is crucial for and enriches our client work. However, I was not content with just understanding or 'verstehen' *how* the experience of working with a white English therapist/counselor was conceptualized or understood by Irish clients. I also wanted to construct an explanation or 'erkären' as to *how* this experience was understood to be located in the broader historical, political and cultural context. In addition, I felt the need to ground the experience in the bigger picture in which this experience, from my epistemological viewpoint, was and continues to be co-constructed. I believe that only by producing such a tentative explanation or theory would it be possible to engage with influential power processes at play in the mental health services. It was evident that the 'white' Irish client group was in need of attention but that it was not being granted. My aim was also to use the attained knowledge for political action (Burman, 1989; Lewin, 1952). Such a tentative theory could then be used as a model in training and practice in addition to providing a tool for critiquing the status quo and in lobbying for the Irish client group in the realms of the mental health services.

### 3.2 Rationale for the Methodology

*"Qualitative research thus refers to the meanings, concepts, definitions, characteristics, metaphors, symbols and descriptions of things. In contrast quantitative research refers to counts and measure of things"*

-Berg, (1998:2)

My philosophical assumptions led me organically to the human science tradition and its emphasis on understanding and interpreting contextual meanings and co-constructed truths, on examining process and interaction and on commitment to reflexivity, both theoretically and personally. My research question was concerned with the 'hows' and 'whys' of a little-explored lived social process rather than the 'whethers' or 'how much' (Creswell, 1998). I was attempting to explore an 'intuited' complex subjective phenomenon which, although indicated by a number of writers (e.g. Bracken et al., 2001), may prove to be solely located in my own experience. My hope was to "*gain an understanding of the nature and form of the phenomena, to unpack meanings, to develop explanations (and) to generate ideas, concepts and theories*" (Ritchie et al., 2003:82). As yet, there was no 'established' phenomenon that could be quantified, counted or measured. The interpretivist, social constructionist, qualitative research paradigm offered me the epistemological and ontological framework for this piece of research.

My embeddedness in the topic at hand and the dearth of research and literature relating to this particular dyadic structure necessitated that I keep close and remain open to data emerging from the ground. Only then could I uncover and explore the meanings given by the actors to the

multifaceted *processes* under consideration. My aim was to then develop from the grounded experience of a group of 'white' Irish clients a possible middle-range theory to explain co-constructed understandings. At the same time, however, I wished to clarify the embeddedness of both our process of theory construction and outcome in our broader, more stable societal and historical processual worlds. I was very aware that I needed a flexible, hermeneutical, dialogic, dialectical but disciplined methodology to answer an open-ended exploratory question.

### 3.2.1 Choosing a Methodology

In choosing my methodology, I was thus guided by the fact that I was in need of an interpretative approach, which would allow not only for an understanding of a specific lived relational experiencing and its attributed meanings but also an explanation as to how this experiencing is linked to broader social processes in context. I was interested in attaining a description both of the experiencing of the individual and of the constructed conceptual relationships linking the individual's intrapsychic, the interpersonal dyad and societal levels of interaction in an attempt to uncover the patterns of action and interaction between. Although numerous methodologies are available within the interpretative qualitative paradigm (Denzin et al., 2005), I was particularly drawn to three approaches as a means of addressing my particular research question: Interpretative Phenomenological Analysis (Smith, 1996), Foucauldian Discourse Analysis (Willig, 2008) and Constructivist Grounded Theory (Charmaz, 2010). Originating in differing but related intellectual fields, namely European Philosophy, Linguistics and Sociology, respectively, each methodology is compatible with a relativist ontology and postmodern epistemology. Additionally, all three implicated the researcher in the analysis; concerned themselves with meanings, even if in different ways; and allowed understanding and patterns to emerge from the research data during a process of discovery (Wertz et al., 2011). Despite the similarities, however, all three approaches to individual epistemological orientations differ at key points, which in turn influenced my final decision.

Interpretative Phenomenological Analysis? The self-psychologist Kohut (1977) stresses the importance of a process referred to as *empathic immersion*. In a clinical setting, this is a process by which therapists immerse themselves temporarily in the client's world, capturing a sense of a client's experience while maintaining their own objectivity. In working with my clients, I strive constantly to fine-tune these phenomenological skills. Although I believe that our subjectivities and assumptions can never be totally 'bracketed' or 'cut out' of our work, I strive to remain forever mindful that my client's experiencing may be very different to that which I may have assumed. It is therefore important for me to try to grasp an understanding of my clients' perceptual experiencing of their world, i.e. to see their world through my clients' eyes. This I believe to be one of the central processes of the therapeutic endeavour. As a research-practitioner, this was also one of my objectives in working with my research participants. A methodology that offered a reflexive

phenomenological framework for engaging with my research participants was that of interpretative phenomenological analysis (Smith, 1996). Emerging from Husserl's (1931) transcendental phenomenology, the goal of this approach is to describe and interpret meanings attributed to lived experiences, meanings gained through the embodied perception of individual research participants. This methodology promised me a possibility of capturing and interpreting the experience of being a 'white' Irish client with a white English therapist/counsellor in an English context and unfolding its meaning and this through the eyes of the 'white' Irish client. This was indeed a central aim in my research journey.

However, my objective was to take a step further than such an understanding and to explore the collective, historical and social contexts from which I believed these meanings arise. I was interested in explaining this experiencing and in establishing possible relational processes not only at individual but also at the personal and societal levels. In contrast, although interpretative phenomenological analysis adopts a social constructionist view that cultural and historical processes are implicated in our experiencing and meaning-making, it focuses primarily on describing each individual's subjective reality without concerning itself with explaining how these experiences may be linked to an external world or to how meanings may be co-constructed in context (van Wright, 1971; Willig, 2008).

A conceptualization of a world separate from the individual's experience is not offered because it is not deemed of importance in answering psychological questions (van der Berg, 1972). Experience is assumed to be already meaningfully organized and theory thereby unnecessary. Thus, this approach did not offer me the tools with which to establish possible relational organizational dynamics I assumed existed outside the actual experiencing itself. Due to my own epistemological leanings and my assumption of the embedded and co-constructed nature of relational experience and meanings, this particular approach failed to offer a framework for my complete journey.

Foucauldian Discourse Analysis? Foucauldian discourse analysis (Willig, 2008) appealed to me because of its focus on the role of language in constituting the social and psychological world. This reflexive approach recognizes, as I do, that purported 'truths', including that of my own as a researcher, are "*ideological, political and permeated with values*" (Schwandt, 2000:198). Foucault's (1967, 1970) poststructuralist theories of knowledge-power relationships had always provided me with a critical lens through which to view my many worlds. Since taking my communications degree and throughout my years in advertising, I have always been interested in exploring how language and discourse are interwoven into societal and institutional practices of positioning and communicating various contextual selves. From my initial exploration into the literature, I had become painfully aware that the 'white' Irish client group in England appeared to be wrongly excluded from the dominant entrenched discourse on 'difference' in the mental health services by being positioned as 'white' and part of the dominant white English group by the powers-that-be.

This occurred despite their experiencing of difference and disempowerment vis-à-vis this group (Hickman, 1995; Gray, 2002; Clucas, 2009). Foucauldian discourse analysis offered me a framework to describe the discursive worlds my participants inhabit and to explore associated implications for their subjectivity and experience. It would answer the question of what it is like to be positioned as a 'white' Irish client and explain the kinds of actions and experiences allowed with such a positioning.

However, one of my reservations in employing this approach in engaging with my research question was the apparent assumption of Foucauldian discourse analysts that discourses actually construct subjects, that they provide the lens through which people experience phenomena. This gave me the sense of a unified discourse, together with its associated language, as an ontological existence prior to the actual subjective experiencing. It conjured up the image of a tapestry of multiple preexisting unitary selves 'into' which people are first positioned and then experience in certain ways (see Willig, 2008). But was there a clear, separate, rigid, unitary discursive 'white' Irish client positioning that my research participants could occupy? If so, how are these discourses themselves constructed and shaped in historical and social co-constructed relational 'realities'? I believe that discourse cannot be all that a self constitutes. I experience my 'white' Irish self as multiple, emotional and embodied, complex and multiple, conscious and unconscious, formulated but also unformulated, known and unknown, contradictory, hated and loved, contextual and always deeply relational. I was aiming to catch a glimpse of what I intuited to be a multifaceted relational dynamic, which can never be known and of which discourse was part but not the central originating force. I was interested in more than just the spoken but also the unspoken. I was curious to learn how the research participants themselves experience their co-constructed, embodied, emotional and discursive 'white' Irish selves in context and to gain an understanding of how this process may be linked to external frameworks.

Constructivist Grounded Theory?

*"Data do not provide a window on reality. Rather, the 'discovered' reality arises from the interactive processes and its temporal, cultural, and structural contexts"*

-Charmaz, (2000:524)

From my initial engagement with constructivist grounded theory (Charmaz, 2010), I was attracted by its epistemological orientation, phenomenological reflectivity and systematic analytic processes, in addition to its constructive theorizing, focus on processes rather than constructs and its mandate that 'all is data'. Constructivist grounded theory situates itself within the qualitative, interpretative social constructionist paradigm and is a branch of a more positivistic grounded theory tradition (Glaser et al., 1967). However, it differs in a number of important ways from the original form. The original version of grounded theory emerged from a dialogue between two quite different schools of



thought, in the persons of Glaser and his rigorous quantitative training at Colombia University and Straus and his Chicago School training, with its emphasis on pragmatism, on studying process, action and meaning. The phenomenologically oriented grounded theory approach combined “*the depth and richness of qualitative interpretive traditions with the logic, rigor and systematic analysis inherent in quantitative survey research*” (Walker et al., 2006:548). Its basic aim to develop or induce new theory from research data rather than merely verify those existing was important for me as I myself was endeavouring to explore an intuited experiencing for which there was no theory.

Although the original grounded theory methodology held promise as a research paradigm for my research journey on one level, I was unable to reconcile my epistemological philosophy with that of Glaser and Strauss. Glaser (2003) presents grounded theory as a general method, ontologically and epistemologically neutral, in essence. Such a claim, as Bryant (2009) points out, is an ‘epistemological fairytale’. Indeed, far from being neutral, grounded theory’s basic objectivist assumptions have been criticized by many (Charmaz, 2010). Glaser (2003), for example, contends that grounded theory participants serve purely as informants. The researcher is assumed to be an objective observer waiting to discover ‘the’ truth as it emerges from the data. This is for me a realist orientation, grounded firmly in a positivist epistemology. Additionally, the call to refrain from a literature review until after analysis suggests that a researcher can approach the data like an empty, analytic vessel. In my view, this is humanly impossible. I agree with Dey’s (1999) recommendation that the researcher adopt instead an ‘open-mind’. It was clear that the original form of grounded theory was incompatible with my own philosophical position, and as Etherington (2004d:25) notes “*personal views and beliefs...guide our choices between paradigms and methods*”. However, the epistemological stance of Charmaz’s (2010) constructivist grounded theory offshoot provided the bridge I needed.

Philosophically, Charmaz (1995, 2003, 2006, 2010) adopts a social constructionist take on grounded theory, contesting that theories and categories are *constructed* by the researcher, *shaped* by the researcher’s personal, philosophical, theoretical and methodological background, *to form but one of many possible truths*. Reflexivity, she believes, is paramount and calls for careful documentation of researcher’s thoughts, decisions, interpretations, assumptions and values throughout the process. She thus adopts an interpretative constructivist stance informed by symbolic interactionism and social constructionism.

Charmaz’s (2010) interpretative constructivist approach to grounded theory sits comfortably with my own worldview. As mentioned above, I locate myself at a more relativist position on the realist-relativist spectrum. I assume that there exists in the world multiple truths or phenomenological realities. I believe that in relationships we strive to understand and co-construct identities and relational meanings and that this process is always context-bound. This process is informed by

broader truths/identities, which themselves have been formed in, and contribute to forming, larger systems-within-systems of social and institutional practices, of 'voices' and social conversations, many of which are simply taken for granted. Our responsibility is to understand, examine and contribute to these conversations...to keep a dynamic and reflective dialogue going. Charmaz's (2005) reflections on the application of constructivist grounded theory in social justice research, in which she stresses the importance of a stance of critical inquiry, contributed to my final decision to adopt a constructivist grounded theory methodology:

*'... grounded theory provides methods to explicate an empirical process in ways that prompt seeing beyond it. By sticking closely to the leads and explicating the relevant process, the researcher can go deeper into meaning and action than give in words...In this way a focused grounded theory portrays a picture of the whole'*

- Charmaz (2005: 529-530)

### *3.2.2 Constructivist Grounded Theory*

Having examined a variety of inquiry strategies within the qualitative paradigm, I therefore decided that Charmaz's (2010) constructivist grounded theory approach and its phenomenological focus on lived experiences and meanings in data sets promised to answer my search criteria best. Constructivist grounded theory shares my assumption of the co-constructedness of meanings and the importance I attach to both understanding and theory building.

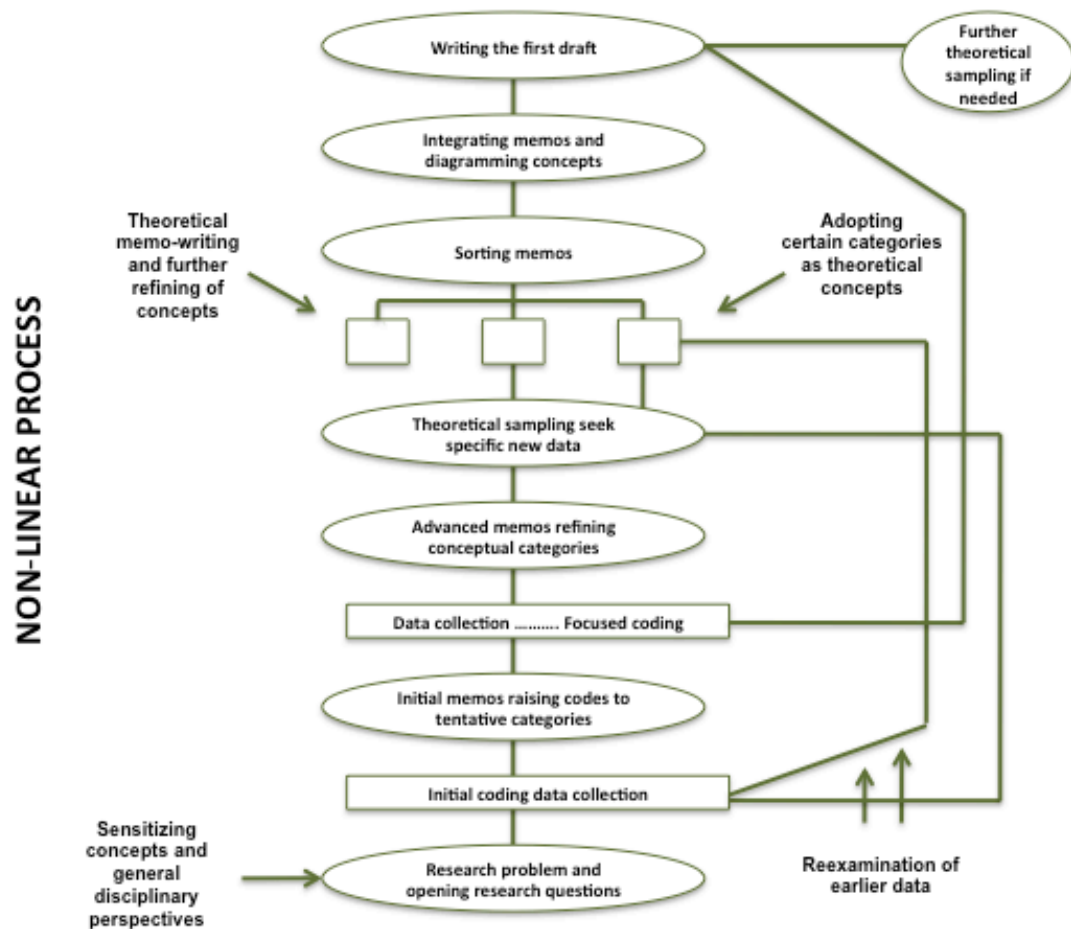
I saw my ultimate challenge as that of explaining relationships or links between intrapsychic and interpersonal phenomena in terms of macroscopic issues in the broader context. In answer, I found Charmaz's (1995:28-29) claim that her approach is ideal for "*studying individual processes, interpersonal relations and the reciprocal effects between individuals and larger social processes*". This approach provided a framework that allowed me to examine the tension between the conscious and unconscious as it manifests itself in interpersonal and societal relational patterns as they emerged from the data. I expected the movement this approach allowed between the individual, interpersonal and societal levels of interaction would facilitate the identification of parallel processes, which may be at play at the multiple interweaving relational levels through which we move. Such parallel processes are indicative of implicit relational patterns and mirror unconscious transference/countertransference dynamics internalized during early childhood development (Hakeem, 2010). Although never articulated, they shape our expectations, the meanings we give to our actions and feelings, our selective attention and our construction of relationships (Meek, 2003). Within such systems, unconscious common defence mechanisms such as conflict, denial, resistance, rationalization, reaction formation, identification and projection and displacement may make themselves visible and open to reflection (Stolorow et al., 1987). The

constructivist grounded theory lens promised to allow me to get a glimpse of the internal cultural and historical 'self-with-other' or 'relational models' (Mitchell, 2000) which my Irish client participants and I as researcher may be unknowingly calling on in our present-day intercultural relating with white English Others, generally and particularly with therapists/counsellors.

Acknowledged as having "*enormous appeal for a range of disciplines due to its explanatory power*" (Mills et al. 2006:32), I was particularly drawn to its usefulness in my search for my own explanation. This attraction was strengthened by its apparent usefulness in inquiries dealing with interaction and little-examined themes, as in my case (McCann et al., 2003a). Its iterative theory-generating and flexible method for data collection and interpretative analysis also promised, as Pidgeon et al. (1997:255) noted, both to "*stimulate and discipline (my) theoretical imagination*". Additionally, this methodology's systematic processes promised that I could remain documentably true to my participants' actual lived experience (McLeod, 2003).

A social constructionist lens is used to build a possible, tentative theory with the capacity to hold explanatory power. The theory's core values of carrying out research 'with' as opposed to 'on' participants, of recognizing the subjectivity of each individual and of locating the participants in a world with a focus on an external locus of control also reflected my own values. Charmaz (2006) argues, as I do, that multiple realities exist in the world and that only partial and conditional generalizations, located in time and space, can be made. She acknowledges the subjectivity inherent within analysis and theoretical development and stresses reflexivity and openness on the part of the researcher in data generation, in data analysis and the production of theory. The methodology offered me a constructivist approach to collecting and analyzing data, which prioritised the voices of the participants and allowed me the flexibility to follow informed 'hunches' and 'intuitive knowing' (Sarantakos, 2005:119).

The grounded theory process varies between practitioners but comprises certain common features (Figure 3.1). The process is non-linear and emphasizes simultaneous engagement with data collection and analysis "*interwoven in a seamless dialectic*" (Dey, 2004:84). Consequently, the methodology also provided me with a systematic, flexible and transparent scaffolding for identifying the core themes and process(es) in the data by means of an analysis, which starts with description and moves to interpretation.



\*Diagram taken from Charmaz(2010)

1. Data collection and coding: The initial step involves data collection, transcription and assembly for coding, labeling, defining and describing. The emerging codes can be descriptive at first but on further analysis take on an analytic form as they are integrated into units of meaning.
2. Memo writing (both reflective and analytic): This is carried out throughout the process to facilitate the coherent dissecting and analysis of codes.
3. Constant comparative analysis: Instances of a phenomenon are compared for differences. Negative case analysis is conducted and disconfirming instances considered. This concludes when the data is 'saturated'.
4. Theoretical coding and sampling: Following from step 3, further data is collected from original sources for clarification. Categories are identified, integrated and linked together. Relationships are then established between these categories, based on differences and similarities. These categories are thus never pre-defined but emerge from the data during the coding process.
5. Theoretical saturation: When new data fail to provide new insights data collection can stop.
6. Theoretical sorting: Memos & categories are logically sorted to aid theory linking and category comparison.
7. Literary review and theoretical framework. It is *recommended* that the literary review is conducted later (Glaser, 1978). This was a recommendation with which I took issue. Please refer to section 3.3 on 'Main Methodological Issues'.

Fig.3.1 Grounded Theory Process

### 3.2.3 Collecting Data: Adapted Cooperative Inquiry

A central requirement in creating a grounded theory is to remain open and flexible regarding the research design. This allows the data collection to be moulded and modified in the pursuit of the most significant material. It is necessary to keep returning to the study site in developing concepts via theoretical sampling. I required a longitudinal data-generation method, which would allow me to creatively move back and forth between analysis, data collection and theorizing.

Additionally, I was constantly accompanied by a deep sense that the processes and meanings I sought to explore arose from the collective. I felt a need to capture as much of this rich collective living interaction as possible (Geertz, 1973). Charmaz (2003:281) suggests it is through “*sharing the worlds of our subjects, (that) we come to summon an image of their constructions and our own*”. I thus went about creating such a living collective space in order to facilitate a reemergence of these shared collective meanings, assumptions and processes in the lived experience of a reflective group process. As Suzuki (2007:311) notes, groups “*elicit spontaneous and affectively rich statement that would otherwise be unavailable to the researcher in individual interviews*”.

I concluded that the data collection process needed to take the form of a natural, open, joint conversational group dialogue. This creative process could then be contained within the disciplinary framework of constructivist grounded theory. This led me to incorporate a version of Reason et al.’s (1986) cooperative inquiry format as my method of data generation. Dick (2007) notes the advantages of combining action research, e.g. cooperative inquiry and grounded theory:

*“action researchers can learn from grounded theorists by being more explicit about the actual theory they develop and how they do so. Grounded theorists can learn how to involve their informants more directly in the research process, how to collect and interpret data more economically and how to involve themselves more directly in action”*

-Dick, (2007:399).

Cooperative inquiry’s (Heron, 1996) interpretivist, social constructionist philosophy is one shared by Charmaz (2006). A cyclical strategy founded on the “*intentional interplay between reflection and making sense on the one hand, and experience and action on the other*” (Heron et al., 2001:179) ensures that any theoretical knowledge developed is “*rooted in and derived from the experiential and practical knowledge of the subject in the inquiry*”(Reason et al., 1986:458). Central to this approach is the idea of critical subjectivity and inter-subjectivity, which demand that all participants give “*self-reflexive attention to the ground we stand on*” (Reason et al., 1995:124). This promised that all constructions could be challenged, opened up and reflected on and then reconstructed in grounded theory’s circular process of data collection and analysis.

The method of a longitudinal cooperative inquiry promised to capture subtleties in meanings and process over time as the individuals bonded and the group melted into a collective cultural force. It

would allow me to access more detailed and richer data pertaining to participant attitudes, emotions, motivations and actions in context.

Cooperative inquiry emphasises a collaborative human process which fosters the “...*emergence of a self-aware, critical community of inquiry nested within a community of practice*” (Reason, 2008:215), as does constructivist grounded theory, which calls for research ‘with’ rather than ‘on’ people (Heron, 1996). It adopts the principles of both epistemic participation and political participation: All ‘propositional’ knowledge emerging from the research will be grounded in experiential knowledge, and all participants will be involved not only as ‘co-participants’ but also as ‘co-researchers’. Furthermore, Reason suggests that cooperative inquiry is most successful with a “*group of people who experience themselves as relatively empowered and who wish to explore and develop their practice together or as a process through which a group of disempowered people may join together to explore their world*” (1998:147). It thus fitted well with my aim of working with fellow empowered practitioners who I intuited may be also members of a disempowered community.

The inquiry involved cycles comprising each of four phases of reflection and action (adapted from Reason, 1994:326-327), each involving primarily one form of the four forms of knowledge identified in Heron’s (1996) extended epistemology (Fig 3.2). Propositional knowledge is knowledge about something and is expressed in statements and theories. Practical knowledge refers to how to do something. Experiential knowledge is gained through direct encounter face-to-face with persons, places or things. Presentational knowledge is the process by which we first order our tacit experiential knowledge into patterns (images, dreams, stories, creative imagination). It is often a bridge between experiential knowledge and propositional knowledge.

This cyclical process of reflection and action appealed greatly to me. In line with developmental theorists such as Schore (2003) and Stern (2003), I assume that many deeply engrained transgenerational relational patterns and defense mechanisms are internalized from care-givers and the wider developmental context through affective relating in our early years. These may only be available to us as ‘felt senses’ or ‘unthought knowns’ (Bollas, 1989) at affective and embodied experiential levels. In my role as a relational psychotherapist, I thus attend to both the implicit and explicit levels of my client relationships. This attention is never merely a cognitive exercise but always includes my affective and embodied engagement in interaction. Often only on reflection with my client, supervisor or in my session notes, can I grasp the emerging patterns of interaction and open them up to reflection and verbalization. Within the collective cyclical reflection-action process which the cooperative inquiry format offers, I anticipated that automatic or unconscious and previously ‘unthought’ affective collective relational patterns or transference/countertransference processes may be identified on joint and individual reflection (Schön, 1983;

Schore, 2003). This could then open them up to a joint inquiry as to their origin in the broader historical context.

Phase	Activity
1	The participants will meet to explore an agreed area of human activity, in this case the therapeutic process under consideration. The themes emerging from my researcher interviews will be presented. The participants will agree on focus and methods and perhaps define terms. They may choose to explore some aspect of experience, agree to try out in practice some particular skills, or seek to change some aspect of their worlds. They also agree to some set of procedures by which they will observe and record their own and each other's experience. This phase will mainly involve propositional knowledge.
2	The group will then apply these ideas and procedures in their everyday life and work (in the group e.g. role-plays and in real life e.g. focused attending/informal interview). They will initiate the agreed actions and observe and record the outcomes of their own and each other's behaviour. This phase involves practical knowledge.
3	The participants immerse themselves in the activity and experience. They may sometimes forget the inquiry process, may come across unexpected and unpredictable experiences, may develop creative new insights. This stage of full immersion is fundamental to the whole process and may be experienced as a period of chaos (Critten, 2007). This phase mainly involves experiential knowledge.
4	After an adequate period in Phases 2 and 3, the co-researchers will return to consider the original research questions, hypotheses or propositions, in the light of experience, making sense, theorizing, modifying, reformulating, and rejecting, adopting new hypotheses, and so on. They may also amend and develop their research procedures more fully to record their experience. Thus this phase involves a critical return to propositional knowing.

Fig. 3.2 Cooperative Inquiry Four-Phase Cycle

Heron (1996) outlines that cooperative inquires tend to be either largely Apollonian or mainly Dionysian<sup>17</sup>. Although the main aim of the inquiry is the generation of a propositional knowledge, I believe, as mentioned above, that this can only be attained by engaging with the research process at multiple levels of experiencing, both implicit and explicit. Thus, I contend that this piece of research included both Apollonian and Dionysian elements

### 3.3 Main Methodological Issues

#### 3.3.1 The Literature Review

Glaser's (1978) original idea of strict induction together with the associated mandate to delay the literature review to a later stage in the grounded theory research process has been problematized by many (Thornberg, 2012). The reasons given for doing so originate from a belief that early engagement with the literature may contaminate the data collection and analysis and may hinder discovery.

Charmaz also advises the researcher delays the literature review to "*avoid importing preconceived*

<sup>17</sup> An Apollonian format is planned, "rational, linear, systematic, controlling and explicit"(Heron, 1996:45) and a Dionysian, "imaginal, expressive, spiraling, diffuse, impromptu and tacit" (Heron, 1996: 46).

*ideas and imposing them on your work*" (2006:165). Ironically, one of the reasons I chose constructivist grounded theory was because I wished to reduce the impact of my previously attained knowledges and preconceptions. I had read extensively prior to starting the research. Due to the dearth of literature on the theme within the discipline of counselling psychology, I felt a need to examine all that was written in order to identify a possible reason for the lack of coverage. I also considered it essential to broaden the review to include insights offered by other areas, e.g. history, cultural studies, social psychology and postcolonial literature. Only by carrying out such a detailed examination could I identify the missing pieces and fill in gaps in my knowledge. Such a review also ensured that I was not merely addressing a previously researched area. Thus, I did not approach the research with 'an empty head' Dey (1999) but one that was 'full' with experiences, questions and theories and 'coloured' by an emotional world I did not fully understand. However, I believe now that one of grounded theory's strengths is that it offers "*a method of analysis that keeps (my) own interpretive activity at bay*" (Dallo et al., 2005:54).

### *3.3.2 Insider or Outsider?*

This inquiry was internally initiated. As a 'white' Irish Catholic therapist/counsellor with an Irish accent, I may be identified as an 'insider' researcher (Brannick et al., 2007). An 'insider' role has its advantages and disadvantages (see Talbot, 1998-1999). In my case, I believe this role led rapidly to an intensive, deep cultural bond and to an open sharing of difficult emotional worlds.

However, in my view, my roles shifted in context. The fact that I did not live in England and was the only person using the data for academic purposes also made me an 'outsider'. Consequently, I sometimes felt removed from my colleagues' experiential ground. I was, for example, very conscious that following each inquiry group, I literally 'flew out' of the experiential context under investigation into another cultural context. My co-participants, on the other hand, continued to live, experience and reflect from within these very relational frameworks. However, I believe in retrospect that this very fact may have given me enough distance from the research scene to allow me to perceive and experience it from multiple perspectives. I endeavoured, therefore, in my analysis to keep both 'insider' and 'outsider' perspectives in mind and tried as suggested by Corbin Dwyer et al. (2009) to occupy and reflect from the space between both positions.

### *3.3.3 Data Collection via Cooperative Inquiry*

In deciding to use a group setting as my primary source of data, I was aware of a number of related issues.

First, disclosure of more sensitive themes may have been hindered by the presence of other participants (Willig, 2008).



Additionally, issues concerning our roles arose. As the main researcher, initiator, facilitator, coder and author, I found myself withholding views for fear of imposing preconceptions. I sometimes found myself listening and observing rather than participating. Also, I was mindful of my own position of power. Although I shared my codes and categories with the group, I was very aware that I had carried out the coding alone. I would thus conceptualize the inquiry as a 'partial' form of cooperative inquiry (Reason, 1994). I was more fully involved in research decision-making than my inquiry-participants and less involved in the experience and action being explored.

Nevertheless, I believe that the power imbalance was reduced as members brought different knowledges and experiences into the space. Additionally, I believe that I achieved what Reason deemed essential: *"that at a minimum everyone involved needs to be initiated into the inquiry process, and given their free and informed assent to all decisions about process and outcome"* (Reason, 1994:326). Furthermore, in presenting my findings, I ensured that the propositional knowledge presented in this paper was grounded in their words.

### **3.4 Research Design**

The research design (Fig. 3.3) involved three main phases. Following the execution and analysis of two researcher interviews, the cooperative inquiry group was formed with a group of 'white' Irish Catholic therapists/counsellors. Following the constructivist grounded theory analysis of the inquiry data, the results were presented by members of the 'white' Irish Catholic cooperative inquiry group to a group of white English therapists/counsellors in a dialogic workshop setting. The workshop was then similarly subjected to a grounded theory analysis. The emerging findings from these phases, together with my associated interpretations, are outlined in this report.

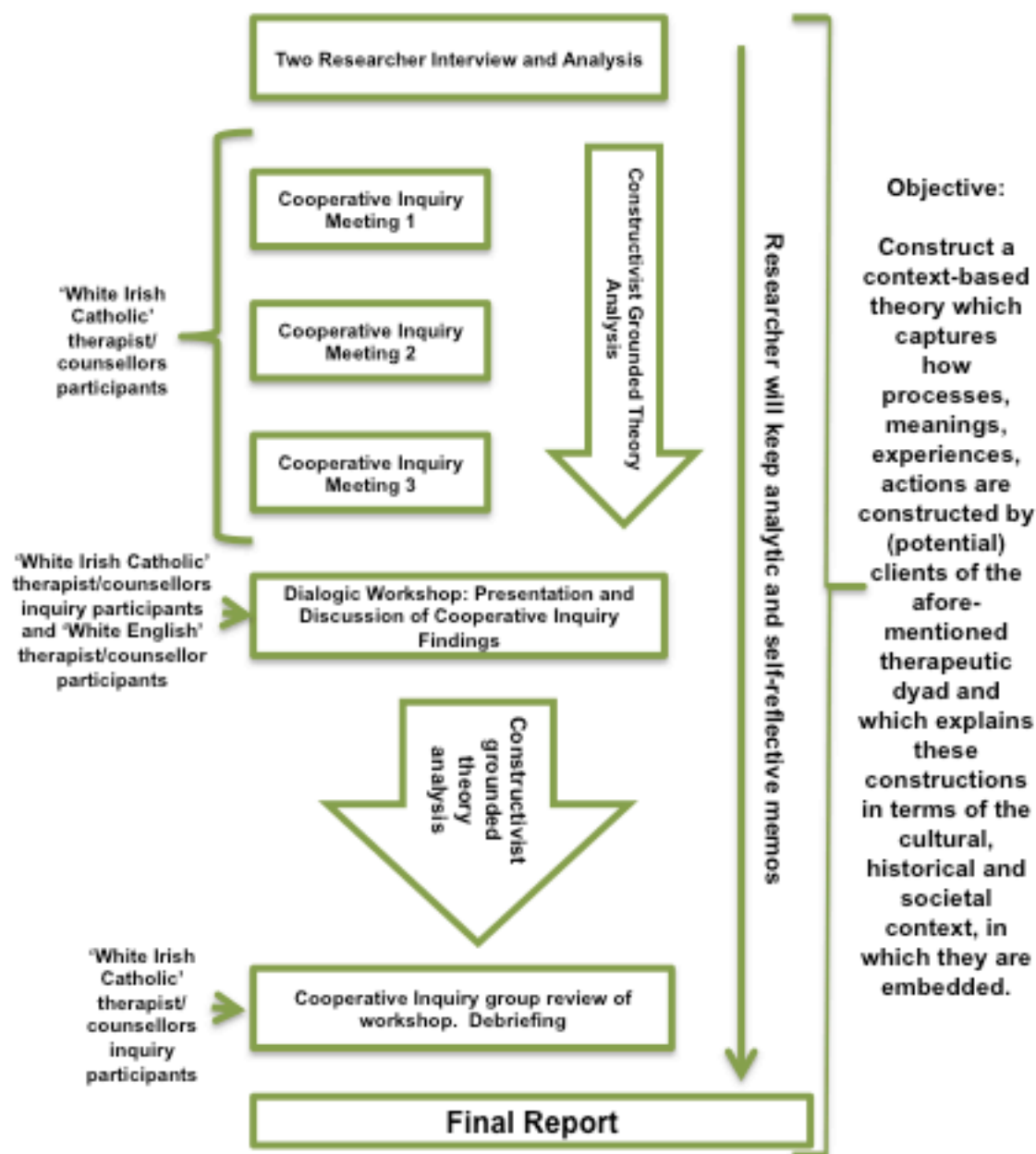


Fig. 3.3 Research Design

### 3.4.1 Recruiting

#### 3.4.1.1 'White' Irish Therapist/Counsellor Cooperative Inquiry Group Participants<sup>18</sup>

For the cooperative inquiry, I recruited participants representing a 'white' Irish client group from the psychotherapeutic/counselling community in England. As outlined above, I aimed to recruit inquiry-participants who, as working professionals, "have taken an action or (are) participating in a process that is central to the grounded theory study" (Creswell, 1998:114). This was a purposive, self-selecting sample (Bryman, 2008). The group collaborated with me in exploring and explaining the above-mentioned therapeutic process from two perspectives: within the action (experiencing

<sup>18</sup> Throughout the text, I use the term 'inquiry-participants' in referring to the cooperative inquiry members

as clients) and outside (reflection as professionals). My focus on the psychotherapeutic population also answered my dual aim of both generating knowledge from the experiential ground and feeding knowledge generated in the research directly back to the practical ground (Reason, 1994).

Inquiry-participants had to live in England and have had therapy in England, either in an Irish-English or Irish-Other-Group constellation. I aimed to thus bridge a gap in my knowledge as, although studying in England, I had never lived or had therapy in England. The 'white' Irish client group would *identify* themselves as first-, second- or third-generation Irish (historically Irish Catholic<sup>19</sup>). In including as wide a variety as possible, I sought to access as broad a range as possible of relevant processual themes, perspectives and experiences (Hickman et al., 1997). These working professionals had to have a minimum of 300 hours of client work, which promised a rich experiential resource for the cooperative inquiry. I offered to pay travel expenses and supply refreshments.

I created a flier and distributed the invitation to:

- two training institutes
- a number of counselling/psychotherapy associations (British Psychological Society, British Association for Counselling and Psychotherapy, Immigrant Counselling and Psychotherapy, Irish Forum for Counselling and Psychotherapy)
- fellow trainees and colleagues.

Following a period of meagre response, I decided to take up personal contact with potential participants via '<http://www.counselling-directory.org.uk>'. This medium proved to be the best option. I sent one email with the flier and participant information attached and then, where there was no response within a week, I sent a follow up. When no response was received thereafter, no further contact was made.

I was aware that the flier communicated my interests and reflected on whether I was imposing my own concepts and assumptions on the research participants' reality. However, I was assured by Charmaz's (2006:16) advice that research should be approached with 'theoretical sensitivity'.

I supplied all interested respondents with 'Participant Information Sheets' and 'Informed Consent Forms'. Finally, eight respondents agreed to participate in the initial introductory session and seven arrived on the evening (Fig 3.4). Prior to the first meeting, I also emailed further documents to the potential group members: 'Introduction to the method of Cooperative Inquiry' and 'Possible Agenda for the Initial Meeting' (Appendix 2). One inquiry-participant (a fellow doctoral student) was previously known to me. The respondents represented a number of psychological orientations.

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<sup>19</sup> Religious denominations became attached to the colonized and colonizer in Ireland, due to the fact that the Irish population was Catholic at the time of the plantations in the 1600s and the English colonizers Anglican/Protestant following the English reformation.

The venue for the cooperative inquiry was a London training institute. Dates and times were agreed with the potential inquiry-participants.

Name	Age	Gender	1 <sup>st</sup> or 2 <sup>nd</sup> generation	Decade of Migration	Psychological Orientation
Ailish	50	F	1st	1970's	Person-centred/Transactional Analysis
Therese	42	F	1st	1990's	Integrative
Gerry	44	M	2nd	1950's/60's	Humanist/Relational
Dermot	65	M	2nd	1940's	Person-Centred
Brid	46	F	1st	1990's	Humanist/Transactional Analysis
Joanne	54	F	1st	1980's	Integrative
Tom	66	M	1st	1990's	Person-Centred/Psychosynthesis/CBT

Fig. 3.4 Inquiry-Participant Information

### 3.4.1.2 *White English Therapist/Counsellor Workshop Group Participants*<sup>20</sup>

Initially, I intended to organize and facilitate the workshop alone after the completion of the cooperative inquiry. However, during the course of the inquiry, the inquiry-participants decided on a different strategy involving their participation in the workshop. All inquiry-participants agreed to invite English colleagues from the profession who:

- had similar professional qualifications and experience as the 'white' Irish client group
- identified themselves as English over three generations
- resident and working as therapists/counsellors in England.

The details regarding workshop structure and procedure were finalized with the inquiry-participants during the last session. The inquiry-participants received via email the 'Participant Information Sheets' and 'Informed Consent Forms' for the guests. The workshop venue organization mirrored that of the cooperative inquiry. Six of the original cooperative inquiry group attended the workshop. Following reflection, one member decided not to participate. Another discovered that she knew no colleague who fitted the profile and yet another group member was unable to recruit due to time constraints. Five guests were invited, and four (two male and two female) arrived on the evening. One of the guests was a colleague of mine. I was concerned about the fact that I was taking a colleague along but was reassured by the fact that he had shown a great

<sup>20</sup> Throughout the text, I use the term 'workshop-participants' in referring to all workshop attendees.

interest in being part of the process and was very enthusiastic and interested prior to the meeting. The guests' age ranged from mid-30s to mid-60s, and the psychological knowledges represented were psychosynthesis, person-centred, integrative.

In endeavouring to maintain the anonymity and confidentiality of all participants, each participant was assigned a pseudonym.

### *3.4.2 Data Collection: Cooperative Inquiry Process with 'White' Irish Participants*

#### *3.4.2.1 The First Meeting*

Before the inquiry-participants arrived, I set up and checked the technical equipment (two tape recorders) and placed refreshments within easy reach of all the chairs, which were arranged in a circle. The same procedure was followed for each session including the workshop. Following the transcription of each session, the transcripts were emailed to the inquiry-participants.

During a short introduction, I again spoke of my motivation, the research question, the cooperative inquiry process and issues of confidentiality, care-taking and freedom to leave at any point. We decided the evening would run for a three-hour period with a 30-minute break. I pointed out again that, as I did not live in England, I was hoping to learn from them. I thus aimed to move away from my initiation role (Heron, 1996).

In the first part of the evening, all inquiry-participants took turns in introducing themselves and discussing their own experiences of living in England and interacting with perceived white English counterparts in all their life-worlds, including that of therapy. We did not impose a structure but decided on a conversational format throughout. However, we committed ourselves to reflecting on the recounted experiences as the basic cycle of action-reflection for the evening. During the break, we left the room for the kitchen. This break, I believe, facilitated greatly the close alliance I feel marked the inquiry thereafter. Following the break, we agreed on the following steps:

- Meet for three further meetings. Dates to be agreed per email. The inquiry ran over a six month-period.
- All meetings would be taped and transcribed. I would analyse the data between sessions and feed the themes into the conversations at subsequent meetings. The group seemed very happy for me to take a lead on such matters.
- I would email the transcript to each member for checking and reflection.
- Leave the process flexible and open to change.
- Cycles of Action/Reflection: Action: Between meetings attend to experience in everyday situations and note thoughts, feelings and actions in interactions with perceived white English counterparts. Reflection: Make sense of them together from various perspectives against a cultural background. The inquiry-participants began to email each other recounting such

experiences, and these were then reflected on in our meetings. I have enclosed one such email in Appendix 3. *“Research cycling means taking an idea several times around the cycle of reflection and action. Primarily this provides a series of corrective feedback loops; it may also clarify and deepen the ideas being explored”* (Reason et al., 1986:467). We agreed that our strategy would take our research question through the essential corrective loops. In practice, I found that the action and reflection often intertwined.

- Reflections were to be noted, where possible, in the notebooks I presented at the end of the session. I believed this would facilitate a further reflective tool, particularly for individual ponderings between our sessions. The inquiry-participants were assured that this was not obligatory but many expressed how useful they found them at various stages during the process.
- Ground rules to be discussed, particularly those pertaining to confidentiality.
- The group would remain closed to ‘visitors’ for the duration of the theory building.
- Sessions to be circa three hours long.
- I had initially thought that we would have a more structured or formal actions (e.g. informal ‘surveys’ with English colleagues, conversations with family members, self-interviews, role plays, completion of and reflection on cultural genograms (Hardy et al., 1995) and/or identity salience models (Yakushko et al., 2009). However, we decided to adopt a more conversational, emergent process. In retrospect, I believe this proved to be a very fruitful structure. Although sometimes chaotic, the process allowed for free-associating, musings and a creative flow during which I believe both implicit and explicit processes and meanings came to light. Dreams, relational memories and imagery were brought into and surfaced within the space and flowed through our dialogue together with the river of emotion that had originally accompanied them. Words were given to individual experiences, and their affective and embodied accompaniment was voiced and reflected. In the recounting and experiencing, patterns were identified and made sense of within the collective of the cooperative inquiry.

### 3.4.2.2 Meetings Two to Three

*“You can’t just set up a cooperative inquiry group, because cooperative processes have to be negotiated and re-learned by every group in every new instance”.*

-Reason, (1988a:19).

Cooperative inquiry is an emergent process, one enriched by the hard work, trust, collaboration and openness of the inquiry-participants. We focused on the theme at hand and mostly caught ourselves if we wandered too far from the theme by using the ‘devil’s advocate’ strategy. I believe this was facilitated by the fact that, as counsellors/therapists, the inquiry-participants were accustomed to using this technique with clients. There were times during which chaos reigned and I felt as I was sinking into an abyss. However, Bryman (2008:437) advises *“by letting the*

*interviewee ramble we have insight into what he sees as relevant and important*". The conversation did tend to ramble during the course of the inquiry, but I believe from this movement emerged the essential themes which proved to be the core of the process under investigation. On analysing the data, I became aware of multiple ordered patterns within the chaos. Importantly, the discussion was rarely abstract but was based on experience. This was important to everyone. We strived for genuine collaboration and searched for possible meanings underlying actions and reactions.

During the course of the inquiry, the four types of knowledges identified by Heron (1996) were interwoven. We recounted stories (presentational knowledge) of experiences (experiential knowledge) in our life worlds. Inquiry-participants also spoke of being changed through the experience of the inquiry. At the end of the research process, inquiry-participants entrusted me with presentational knowledge that, for them, was related to the inquiry: a personal poem, a picture, a prayer, a piece of music, a story. A theory and model (propositional knowledge) were produced from the experiential ground. We learned of the potential impact the cultural context has on our life worlds, including that of our therapy and therapeutic work. Practical knowledge was gained by each member in learning how to reflect on their practice from a broader cultural perspective. Many inquiry-participants spoke of incorporating the understanding both into their personal therapy and their therapeutic work.

At the second meeting, we considered the themes in the emailed transcript, which stood out for the inquiry-participants and dwelled on their representativeness. I noted how the conversation moved from a more general discussion of the theme of the 'Irish-English' relationship to personal accounts of interactions in all areas of life. In particular, experiences in therapy were brought into the room and reflected on within the framework that was evolving.

During the session as the themes were forming into firmer shapes in the analysis and in agreement with the group, I took handouts outlining a number of themes emerging with the associated initial excerpts (Appendix 4). This served to focus the conversation. Themes were further deepened. I invited the inquiry-participants to share their thoughts and feelings as they reflected on the charts. This activity reflected Charmaz's (2006) use of 'theoretical sampling' and 'constant comparative method' in constructivist grounded theory. I was returning to the field with my tentative categories following coding to facilitate further refinement of the key categories. I noted that as the inquiry-participants became more comfortable with each other and the situation, the data were growing in richness and depth. I also fed themes into the conversation if and when they arose again and used them to develop and deepen the reflection:

Tom: *"Yes, I think it's gender, it's, it's even though the kind of farming culture I would have grown up in would be very different, but equally when I'm with another Celt that I find a commonality and it must be a construct in my own head, I can't imagine it's really real. I'm not sure. But that actually when I'm with a Celt whether from Wales or Scotland that I feel a certain commonality with that person."*

Researcher: *"That's kind of what we were talking about the last month as well, that kind of, identification with them...."*

-Session Two, Transcript

During the second and third sessions, the inquiry-participants expressed more and more of an interest in being part of the dialogue with the English therapists. It was decided that all inquiry-participants in the group would take an active part. The workshop was conceptualized as a further action after which we were to meet to reflect at a review session. A discussion arose as to whether it would be better to distribute an invitation, as I had done in recruiting the cooperative inquiry group, or whether we would invite interested white English colleagues to join us. The group felt that the former option may lead to a 'them and us' stand-off rather than a healthy discussion. The latter option was decided upon. Consent was again requested, and all inquiry-participants expressed interest in participating. One inquiry-participant decided later against participating but was updated as to the workshop's outcome. At the final workshop, four of the original inquiry-participants, including myself, brought a guest along. One guest failed to appear, and two of the inquiry-participants reported an inability to find suitable invitees.

Prior to the workshop and following my analysis of the third session and construction of the tentative model presented in this paper, I emailed an overview of the final themes and questions which had emerged from our cooperative inquiry. I resisted placing these in too detailed a structure in order to facilitate a more fluid and creative interaction with the themes. These were checked and agreed upon by the group. I then compiled the workshop presentation as agreed (Appendix 5).

Throughout all phases of this research, I wrote analytic (i.e. questions, reflections and speculations regarding the emerging data) and self-reflective (i.e. personal reactions in the process) memos to document and enrich the analytic process and to make explicit my implicit thinking, i.e. as far as possible (McLeod, 1999).

#### *3.4.2.3 Dialogic Workshop with 'White' Irish Inquiry-Participants and White English Therapist/Counsellor Guests: Disseminating Findings, Inviting Challenge*

The workshop took place two months after the third Cooperative Inquiry Meeting. It began with an open space in which the all workshop-participants introduced themselves and reflected on the theme. Following an open discussion on the research question, I began to introduce one overhead-slide of the agreed presentation of our findings at a time, allowing for feedback and dialogue before



the next was introduced. Following the break, all workshop-participants worked together to give meaning to the findings. By analysing the workshop text for major themes, an important initial external response to the developed theory could then be documented. The workshop transcript was again distributed to the inquiry-participants and a meeting was arranged to review the process.

### *3.4.3 Data Analysis and Theory Building*

The data analysis was carried out in accordance with guidelines suggested by Charmaz (2006). Although I address the process of initial coding, focused coding and theoretical coding sequentially, these processes were carried out simultaneously. For example, the initial inquiry group transcript generated numerous codes, which I then subjected to focused coding, i.e. identifying broader categories into which these may fit. Following the next meeting, I began again with the initial coding of the session transcript. This strategy continued throughout the inquiry. Furthermore, I wish to point out that this section deals primarily with methodological analysis while the discussion communicates the theoretical.

Directly after each meeting, I made notes of any affective and embodied senses and thoughts that I took from the process and jotted down some reflections on our relational interactions. I endeavoured to put words to the atmosphere and mood shifts, to the possible ‘ghost’ affects of transgenerational relational memories emerging not only from our words but also from our silences (Schwab, 2010). I believe this enabled me to capture a flavour of some of the implicit pieces of each dialogue, which I called on during later analysis of the transcripts.

#### *3.4.3.1 Initial Coding*

Following transcription of each session, I immersed myself in the data during an initial coding stage in which each transcript was analysed line-by-line by allocating each line with a label (Appendix 6). I felt that this first step was essential to ensuring that I remain open to the data. Using both the tape recordings and the transcripts, I endeavoured to “*move quickly through the data*” (Charmaz, 2006:49), although I found that this was not all that easy. Sometimes the process flowed, and at other times it felt slow and laborious. Although the position of grounded theorists regarding verification is that the generated theory contains an implicit verification, as it should fit the data (Glaser et al., 1967), I ran all the codes by a research colleague and an external consultant in the psychology area. I was very mindful of the personal piece in the research process and was aware that my own embeddedness in the process may blind me to important emerging themes. I believe that the external consultation ensured that the research is logical and the account, although only one of many possibilities, is produced with system, transparency, coherence, and connected directly to the raw data.

Early coding was descriptive. I used the gerund verb form. This, I believe, kept the analysis alive, moving and open for me and kept me close to the data. It also ensured I did not wander off *too* much into my own preconceptions. In line with Atkinson et al. (1994), I believe that actions are always based within frameworks of social meaning. I thus constantly endeavoured to explicate the implicit and explicit actions, processes and meanings upon which the data rested. During this phase, I kept returning to the questions Charmaz (2006:47) suggests we ask ourselves of our data:

1. What is the data a study of?
2. What does the data suggest?
3. From whose point of view?

I wrote conceptual memos as and when an idea arose (Glaser, 1978). I entered shorter notes that emerged during coding directly into the Word document using the 'Insert New Comment' function. In each case, the piece of raw data referred to was also noted. I also included here any personal assumptions or previously known extant theories that sprang to mind. This allowed me to develop a process I have come to refer to as 'note and bracket' (Appendix 7). As I was moving through the data, any spontaneous thoughts actively 'boxed into' the right-hand margin allowed me to reimmerge myself (as far as humanly possible) into the data. I also wrote longer reflective personal and analytic memos separately. Memos were integrated in later phases and aided the later stage of theoretical sampling. For example, my comment regarding 'shadows' in session one was elaborated upon as the concept of 'hiding the cultural in the intercultural relational' became more figural in the analysis (Appendix 7). My use of memoing also ensured that the extant theories, which appear in the discussion section of this paper, deserved to be in my story-line (Charmaz, 2006). By doing this, I aimed to construct the modules of this complex and multidimensional social phenomenon from the inquiry-participants' viewpoint (Kools et al., 1996).

Although I had initially considered using Atlas-TI to support my analysis, I decided against it because, as a novice grounded theorist, I wanted to ensure that my closeness to the data was not inhibited by technological barriers. Indeed, Holton (2007) cautions that computer assisted coding software programs may prove "*counter-creative to the conceptual ideation imperative for generating good grounded theory*" (2007:287). In line with Reichertz (2007), I found that I used both abductive and inductive thinking while coding. I worked, especially in the initial stages of open coding, from the data to the general, while also reflecting on a variety of possible explanations for the data. The explanation, which appeared for me to answer the research question, is provided in the findings and discussion sections of this thesis.

### *3.4.3.2 Focused Coding*

As coding progressed, analytic categories were identified. I grouped similar descriptive codes into meaningful units for further exploration and theoretical development (Appendix 8).

The resulting categories were subjected to a process of comparative analysis involving comparing data, participants and categories. This supported me in identifying processes linking categories together, and the theory began to take shape. This produced a smaller number of categories into which the initial codes were grouped. Each of the meetings was used to deepen my understanding of the categories. As new data were generated, I returned to check previous categorization to ensure their appropriateness. During this phase, some categories were discarded and other merged until all the data appeared accounted for. Some initial codes were used in more than one category.

#### *3.4.3.3 Theoretical Coding*

In conducting theoretical coding, I aimed to identify solid core categories, which I felt were integral to understanding the therapeutic relational process between a 'white' Irish client and a white English therapist/counsellor, from the client's perspective. These core categories (Appendix 9) were to provide the story-line for my constructed grounded theory. I was conscious that, at this level, my drive to 'construct' my theory may lead to a forcing of the data into preconceived theoretical frameworks. For example, I sometimes found that I lost myself in my memo-writing. In order to ensure I did not get lost in the abstract, I returned repeatedly to the data on the ground tracing my core categories back to the experiential source and grounding my hunches in the actual dialogue. Using theoretical sampling, I also returned to the inquiry-participants during the inquiry with emerging tentative core categories, which allowed me to gather more data relevant to these categories. This theoretical sampling process was interwoven with a 're-view' of the literature and a further search for other 'data-suggested' extant theories. Following on from these processes, I then discarded some categories while developing others until I came to a stage where I appeared to be finding the same patterns. I hasten to add that the patterns I identified were specific to the time, duration and context of the cooperative inquiry. I believe I can never assert that "*fresh data no longer sparks new theoretical insights nor reveals new properties of this core theoretical categories*" (Charmaz, 2006:113). In other words, I disagree with the idea that a category can reach saturation point. I thus prefer to use the Dey's (1999) concept of 'theoretical sufficiency'. I have constructed a theory suggested to me by specific data in context.

#### *3.4.3.4 Analyzing the Workshop Data*

Similarly to the cooperative inquiry, I taped the workshop with the workshop-participants' consent. I personally transcribed this recording and subjected it to a partial grounded theory analysis to allow the main themes to emerge from the actual dialogue. I use the term partial grounded theory as the analysis was carried out on the transcript, which emerged from one single meeting, and believe that further workshop would be needed to ensure theoretical sufficiency. The model that has emerged from this analysis captures my construction of the dialogue process between the cooperative inquiry 'white' Irish client group and an invited group of white English

therapists/counsellors on the themes identified in the cooperative inquiry. The analysis brought forth further support for the model in terms of the 'white' Irish client construction of the relationship in addition to providing an initial reaction to the grounded theory constructed from the cooperative inquiry. As such, I believe it functions as a further validity measure. I include an example of the category formation in Appendix 10.

### **3.5 Ethical Considerations**

McLeod (1994: 165) advises that it is "*necessary to give careful consideration to ethical issues at all stages of the research process*". I consider the upholding of ethics to take the form of a continuous, interactive process rather than simply a commitment to adherence to a set of ethical rules. In addition to adhering to the British Psychological Society Ethics Code (2009) and the British Psychological Society Code of Human Research Ethics (2014), I also endeavoured throughout the study to "*sense, judge and act in an ethically committed fashion*" (Brinkmann et al., 2008:278). Ethical permission for this study was granted by the Metanoia Research Ethics Committee (see Appendix 11).

Participation was on a voluntary basis. I aimed to avoid deception. The participants were informed verbally and in writing about all study aspects. I endeavoured to ensure that the participants' needs were given priority over the research process. I offered to finance a one-off session with a therapist of choice should the need arise.

Written consent was requested at the outset, although the consent process remained continuous and mutual. Taping permission was also requested. Participants were assured that they could withdraw from the research at any time. Debriefing took place, and space for reflection thereafter provided to avoid the participants experiencing a sense of "*hit and run*" (West, 2002:264).

Anonymity of participants (first- and third-party) was of the utmost importance. Pseudonyms were used. In accordance with the Data Protection Act, raw data were stored securely and treated with confidentiality. Two of the transcripts were transcribed by a third party who lived at a location removed from those of the participants. A confidentiality clause was included in our contract. This third party gained access to the data via a secure password-protected internet site. As Berg (2001) suggests, I made personal agreements with the participants regarding ownership of data. During transportation, a password protected memory stick was used. Tapes will be destroyed at the end of the study.

I acknowledge that an appreciation of the particularity of each ethical dilemma is essential. I committed to an 'ethics of care' policy, i.e. reassessing, discussing and updating participation/

consent on recognition of ‘ethically important moments’<sup>21</sup> (Guillemin et al., 2004). I sought to be constantly vigilant for any such signs. At such times, I turned to Haverkamp’s (2005) ethical decision-making process of examining relationality, context and subjectivity in gaining clarity.

Such an ethical dilemma arose during the cooperative inquiry process regarding the workshop. Originally, I had planned to conduct the workshop alone with a group of white English therapists/counsellors following the final debriefing of the cooperative inquiry. However, as the inquiry developed and the relationships and involvement intensified, we entertained the option of cohosting the workshop by each inviting along a white English colleague with whom we would dialogue around our findings. We gave ourselves space and time to reflect on what consequences this could have for our relationships with the invited guests and whether there were any risks for the participants in doing so. I also questioned my own motives around the suggestion. I was aware that the request may have emerged from a fear of not attracting participants for the planned follow-up workshop or a fear of the reactions I would encounter in presenting our findings. However, on reflection both alone and with colleagues, it became clear that my intuitive sense that this new format could be enriching for the participants and the research process was my main motivation. Following verbal consent, the process was initiated.

The participants were encouraged to speak to me if they at any stage felt under stress. The inquiry did indeed create uncomfortable moments, in which participants were confronted with unexpected emotions. I strived to establish an atmosphere in which such emotional distress could be expressed and dealt with immediately (Heron, 1996). One participant, for example, recounted a difficult dream following a meeting. In addition to collectively processing the dream in the group, I also contacted the participant by email afterwards.

I committed to building the relationships with the research participants on the basis of safety, sensitivity, trust and rapport. I believe the cooperative inquiry format and the safe space in which the inquiry was conducted provided the conditions for such relating. I committed to actively listen and to represent my participants’ voices as accurately as possible. I aimed to ensure I would not misuse data by endeavouring at all times to be fair, respectful and honest in collection and analysis. Accuracy of data was checked using strategies outlined above.

### 3.6 Quality and Trustworthiness

Merriam (1995:52) warns that “*notions of validity and reliability must be addressed from the perspective of the paradigm out of which the study has been conducted*”. I aimed to ensure high standards of quality and trustworthiness in this piece of qualitative research by attending to a

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<sup>21</sup> Such a moment arises when participants may be at risk of harm, e.g. emotionally overwhelmed, vulnerable, distressed, stressed, too much disclosure, feelings of coercion/ disempowerment, conflicted, physical risk or boundaries become unclear and relating difficult e.g. power differentials, unclear expectations, conflicting roles, conflicting relationships

combination of quality criteria suggested by Lincoln et al., (2000) and Morrow (2005).

*Reflexivity:* Charmaz (2006) reminds that a reflexive approach to data must be taken if there is to be an ongoing understanding of them being socially produced between researcher and participant. I take a relativist, contextualist position and believe it impossible to be an objective researcher (Parker 1994b; Morrow, 2005). Therefore, prior to the process, I organized two researcher interviews,<sup>22</sup> which supported me in exploring my assumptions. During the inquiry, I found Schön's (1983) concepts of both 'reflection-on-action' and 'reflection-in-action' very useful. Following every meeting, I immediately noted thoughts and endeavoured to describe and reflect on the interactions from multiple perspectives. This aided me in developing the ability to 'reflect-in-action' subsequently. I did my utmost to remain self-aware, critical, discriminating and informed throughout. I also actively invited challenges outside my own subjectivity by encouraging critical intersubjectivity within the group dialogue and by keeping alive a "*critical and sustained discussion*" (Rossman et al., 2003:69), both inside and outside the inquiry.

In my use of reflexivity, I was also mindful of Etherington's (2004d:31) advice that what the researcher includes of the self in a study is "*a means to an end, not an end in itself*". I am visible in this piece but have endeavoured to confine this visibility to the task of making explicit my experience, thoughts and ideas wherever it may be pertinent to the reader's understanding. I have included information concerning the personal experiences leading to this research theme, to my methodological choice and felt senses in the inquiry process. I acknowledge that many of my assumptions may remain unconscious and undocumented due to the limits of the "*possibilities of reflexive accounting*" (Seale, 1999b:64).

*Credibility:* I committed myself to attending to rigour and coherence throughout the research process. I wrote both analytic and reflective memos throughout to record the steps I took in the generation of the final theory. The longitudinal nature of the study ensured that I remained engaged with the participants over a prolonged time. This allowed me to develop an in-depth and detailed understanding of the process under investigation and to capture the multiple shifting selves of all participants, including myself. I include background detail about sample, a clear and detailed account of process and contexts and commentary on the source data, with the main points illustrated by quotes. Negative case analysis was undertaken throughout the analysis. A detailed description of how the data fit with the emerging theory is provided. I asked participants to check the transcripts of recordings for accuracy and to verify my interpretations of the raw data.

As mentioned above, I also employed the service of an independent expert in grounded theory to check my coding. Additionally, I used peer debriefing and triangulation (variety of participants, points of view and existing literature).

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<sup>22</sup> These were conducted by two colleagues from cultures outside those being represented in the study, namely Portugal and Argentina.

*Transferability:* Although I do not believe qualitative findings can be generalized to the broader population, I endeavour to supply sufficient details to allow the reader to decide how the findings could transfer.

*Dependability:* I aim to make the process as explicit as possible to allow for repetition if required. To this end, I kept an audit trail and documented, in chronological order, each activity and each step of the emerging process (Yin, 2003). I supply an in-depth account of how the theory emerged and of any influences that may have played a role on the process. In line with Gibbs (2007) and Charmaz (2010), I constantly compared codes and definitions to ensure there is no shifting in the code meanings during the process and cross-checked these with my external auditor.

*Confirmability:* As recommended by Gasson (2004), I endeavoured to ensure that my findings reflect the actual situation under investigation, as opposed to my own assumptions, preconceptions and beliefs. I strived to represent my participants' views fairly by exploring their realities from the stance of the naïve inquirer (as far as humanly possible).

*Data Adequacy:* Morrow (2005) points to the importance of the quality of each interaction. I aimed to gather rich, thick data by prolonged engagement with this purposeful sample (Geertz, 1973). I believe I have thus ensured a sufficient level of rapport and trust to facilitate openness. I aimed to gain clarification, verification and interpretation during the course of each meeting (Kvale, 1996).

*Adequacy of Interpretation:* I believe the grounded theory framework guided me in systematically interpreting the data. I endeavoured to ensure a balance between my own interpretations and participants' own words in this final written piece.

## 4 THE FINDINGS

### 4.1 Inquiry

This first section of the research findings focuses specifically on those emerging from the inquiry group's reflections on the research question:

**How, in an English context, is the therapeutic work between a 'white' Irish client and a white English therapist/counsellor conceptualized or understood?**

In answering this question, the inquiry-participants reflected not only on experiencing and managing the cultural relational in therapy with white English therapists/counsellors but also on their understanding of the processes involved.

While there are numerous perspectives from which therapeutic work can be understood, this inquiry set out to develop an overarching *cultural* metaperspective, which opens up and broadens the interpersonal space to examine and incorporate the cultural-relational dimension. Although 'culture' can be constructed in various constellations, from the outset, the research question focused the study on a definition of 'culture' as 'nationality'. This was due to my own personal interest as a 'white' Irish researcher in how collective cultural relational experiences between two nations may impact the interpersonal therapeutic dynamics. This lens may have precluded a broader discussion on 'cultural constructs' in which the inquiry-participants would have had the opportunity to articulate their own perceptions of 'culture'. However, 'culture' in terms of 'nationality' appeared to grow organically as 'the' strong differentiator in this particular therapeutic constellation. As the inquiry progressed, a deeply felt cultural difference between the 'white' Irish client and white English therapist/counsellor became evident, which inquiry-participants attributed to the historical relationship between the two nations. This historical relational is conceptualized as influencing the societal and therapeutic relational present-day contexts in England.

As explained in Chapter 3, encouraging the inquiry-participants to codirect their exploration and articulate their ongoing emerging reflections led to a focus on cultural difference in-the-moment. As well as exploring perceptions of the cultural difference, fleeting emotions were thus captured, as were spontaneous images and senses. This process facilitated a more fluid, spontaneous, comprehensive examination of the phenomenon. The inquiry-participants continuously moved between the historical, the societal and the therapeutic levels in their experiencing and making sense. This in turn suggests interplay between these three relational levels, which defies a prising apart into distinct unrelated units. However, for the purpose of clarification, I present the three relational levels as three separate constructs.



Given the multilayered conceptualization of the therapeutic work under study, it is useful to refer firstly to Figure 4.1 below, which constitutes *my* grounded theory model of ‘white’ Irish clients experiencing and understanding of their cultural relating with white English therapists in an English context.

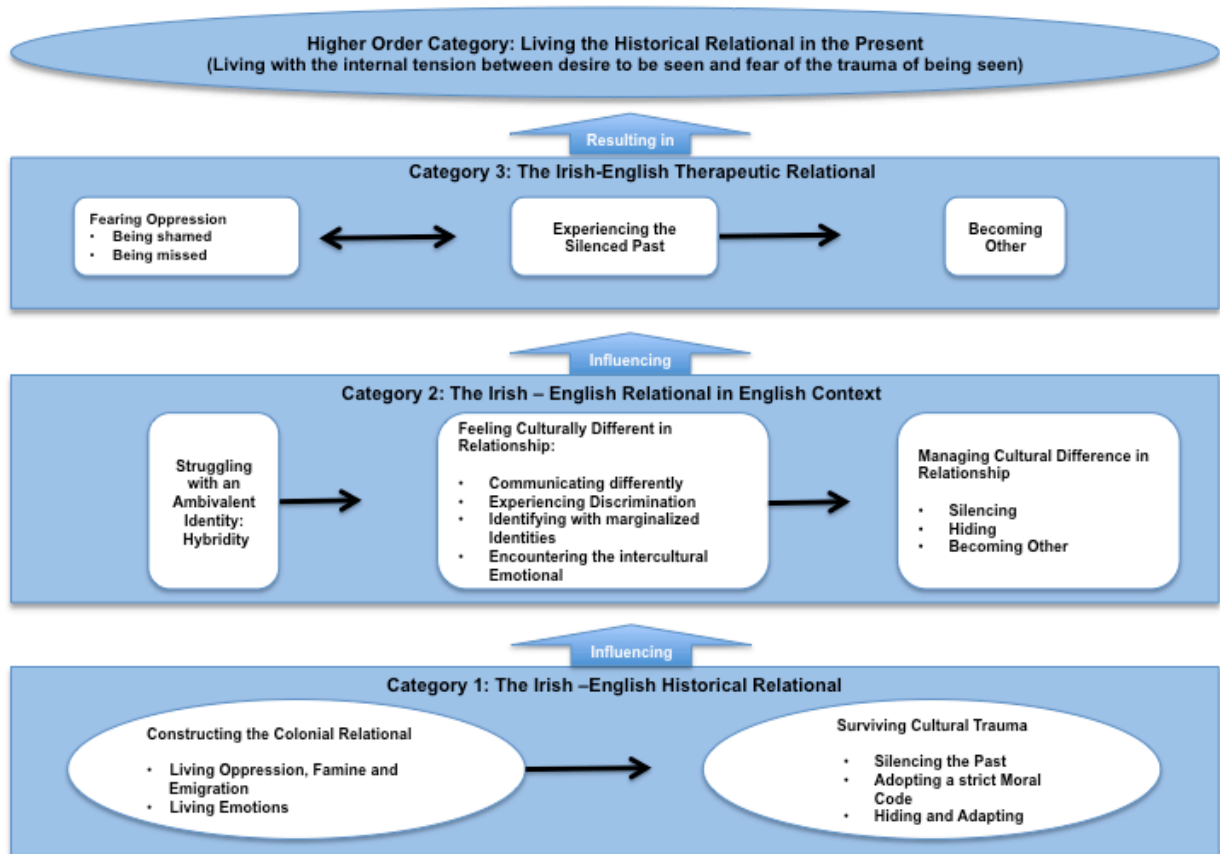


Fig. 4.1: Conceptual Model of ‘white Irish’ clients’ experiencing (How?) and understanding of (Why?) their cultural relating with ‘white English’ therapists/ counsellors

Three interweaving, mutually influential categories became figural for both first- and second-generation Irish during the inquiry. The inquiry-participants identified a cultural relational dynamic in the therapeutic process. This was mirrored in an interpersonal process at a societal level. Both were understood as emerging from the broader historical relationship between England and Ireland. Within each of these categories, further subcategories formed. The higher order category captured a core process played out in various relational configurations in all three of the initial categories. Below, I describe each of the three main categories and end by explaining how the higher order category emerged from these. I will begin with the broader ‘Irish-English Historical Relational’ as this was the relationship that was consistently cited as providing a backdrop to all other interactions. One finding that was clearly evident following the analysis of transcripts was that all inquiry-participants experienced colonial England as the powerful, controlling force, which engineered the present-day cultural relationship on all levels from the historical, through the political, societal, interpersonal and intrapsychic. Ireland, on the other hand, was presented as the sometimes rebellious, mainly passive, adaptive but a cocreator of an imbalanced cultural relational.

At this stage, I would also like to return to the point that the 'white' Irish client group comprised both first- and second-generation Irish. In presenting the findings, I will point out any major differences in experiencing emerging between both groups.

In drafting this findings chapter, I have reflected long and hard on how much of my own process I would include in the end piece. I concluded that for me personally, the most important action, throughout the analysis has been the immersing of my own multiple-selves in my participants' words and emotional worlds. I am aware that my own political, professional and research interests have inevitably influenced the sense I have made of these data. I am present in the choices I have made in my focus, in my model design and in the words I present below. Another researcher may have focused on other themes. The piece that has been most fascinating for me was the fact that often I found a mirror of my own cultural way-of-being-in-relationship in the words and actions of my participants. It was often only in retrospect that I identified this parallel. These I include below. I have also found myself 'knowing' many experiences in the data of which I had been previously unaware of living through. These became explicit in the grounded theory analysis and are incorporated into the model. Furthermore, I became aware from the data that intercultural relational strategies, which proved essential for my participants in surviving as 'white' Irish in the English context, have never had such an existential quality for me in the many other intercultural surrounds in which I have lived and worked. These have also been interwoven into the findings. Although I am inevitably present in the chapter in terms of interpretation, I believe the findings and the associated model remain grounded in the words and emotional worlds of my participants.

#### *4.1.1 The Irish-English Historical Relational*

The category of 'The Irish-English Historical Relational' is based on one finding evident across the data. The inquiry-participants clearly presented this relationship as an important and influential cultural differentiating blueprint for the experiencing and understanding of their international, interpersonal and intrapsychic relational worlds in the present.

##### *4.1.1.1 Constructing the Colonial Relational*

This Irish-English historical relationship was consistently placed within an oppressive, traumatic colonial framework. The Irish were identified as the traumatized colonized in the relationship. The inquiry-participants described the trauma of colonization being intensified by the destructive force of the Famine<sup>23</sup> and ensuing emigration. Throughout the inquiry, no reference was made to an historical relational prior to colonization. The experiencing of this colonial relationship was conceptualized as a lived collective cultural relational trauma passed down through the

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<sup>23</sup> During the years of the Great Famine or Great Hunger (*An Gorta Mór*) (1845-1851), the Irish population fell by 23%. One million people died and a further one million emigrated mainly to America. These people were mostly Catholic.

generations, unresolved and continuing to live in and influence present-day experiencing. The co-inquirers discussed a number of strategies they recognized as being used collectively in surviving cultural trauma in the Irish context. They recognized, on reflection, that they found themselves adopting these same strategies to an even greater extent on migrating to England. It was as if they experienced a more intense reliving in the present of difficult emotional relational experiences from the historical past within the English context.

#### *-Living Oppression, Famine and Emigration*

Throughout the inquiry, the inquiry-participants were in agreement about the nature of the historical relationship between Ireland and England. Colonial structures and processes were constructed to engineer a distinct 'oppressor-oppressed' relational dynamic, referred to as the 'The Irish-English Thing'. Many references were made to colonization as an unresolved traumatic experiencing. The effects were perceived as reaching into the present-day emotional world. Ireland was portrayed as a nation still in recovery, still open to oppression and still weighed down by a traumatic past. It appeared that, in the migratory process, the awareness of the heaviness of this historical past became more apparent or perhaps intensified.

Ailish: *"there is a whole, we're a whole nation that for me is still recovering from trauma, the trauma of colonisation and that's how I see it that actually".*

Brid: *"Like the British oppression, those kinds of oppressions have been around for ages and maybe now it will be the European bank (saying) 'Oh, you are a bad European'. We are easy to oppress' (and)...we are talking about...a psychic wound".*

Therese: *"I am loaded with all my generations, you know. And I just, you couldn't possibly know that (trauma) if you didn't come from that".*

The English colonial presence loomed for the inquiry-participants as an irritable influential force shaping Ireland's historical experiencing, Ireland's institutions and relational 'psyche'. This process was portrayed as uni-directional.

Brid: *"the English are definitely bigger in our heads that we are in theirs. Even going back to our education, our history everything that we were taught, England was big. Ireland is just one of many colonies they have, the closest and the most troublesome".*

Dermot: *"the English don't need to take notice of the Irish in their midst...But we have to take notice of the English (and)...you didn't need a passport (to travel from England to Ireland). They don't need to pay attention to us...If you go across to Calais, you have to have a passport and this creates a sense of confusion and it has all to do with the colonization".*

The traumatic experiencing of colonization was portrayed as intensifying and culminating in the overwhelming destruction of the Irish Famine and the ensuing emigration.

Dermot: *"there's been discussion about it (the Famine), I don't know that much about it, but basically, you know, that it was the first genocide".*

Tom: *"and that (Famine) was an enormously traumatic experience for a nation" (and) "that will have left its generational and inter-generational mark, you know".*

This national wound was held in powerful imagery and associated with specific behavioural patterns and perceived as permeating the fabric of the Irish 'psyche', weakening psychological health.

Therease: *"the Famine and you know, and people coming in, they (my family) had land and they had a pig trough and people who'd be walking the road used to come in and take the food that the pigs were getting, you know, so like there is all this kind of history"*.

Bríd: *"a lot of Irish people speak of a complicated relationship with food or not leaving the plate until it is empty. It is still around for us"*.

Gerry: *"looking at the historical context and it's almost the, the upheaval and the loss, and the, the what's it, the diaspora. I think there is a lot that feeds into poor psychological health"*

Tom: *"...I often stood on the platform in Connemara station and you know, (thought of) the number of people who would have left from there to emigrate"*.

On migration to England, it felt that the participants were confronted with, and indeed relived, the historical pain, the loss and the sorrow. This reliving was intensified, I believe, in the realization in this new English context that this historical trauma was not one experienced or 'known' by cultural Others, but only by the Irish themselves. In the words of the participants, I could feel a sense of isolation, sadness and loss being communicated over and over again.

#### *-Living Emotions*

An associated collective emotional world was identified in the inquirers' reflection on Irish history. Most inquiry-participants described experiencing feelings of shame, guilt, self-blame and loss in the present when reflecting on their own cultural historical past.

Bríd: *"(like the Jews) we are onto the shame-guilt thing as well" (and) "we take guilt and shame on very easily. We wear it like a coat" (and) "we deserve it, we deserve to be tarnished with the inferior brush"*.

Therease: *"It (Famine) was a terrible shameful thing to happen and I think like it could, it's like a lot of other things but also nobody wants to be poor and nobody wants to be starving and nobody wants to lose half their population"*.

Gerry: *"... I think there is an inherited loss, loss is all. I think I feel loss when I think about my history"*.

Tom: *"that theme of loss runs maybe more deeply, it runs, it is something that runs very deeply within us"*.

#### *4.1.1.2 Surviving Cultural Trauma*

All inquiry-participants described collective relational strategies adopted by their Irish forefathers in surviving the collective cultural trauma of colonization, Famine and emigration. The analysis of the data formed these strategies into three sub-categories: Silencing the Past, Adopting a Strict Moral Code and Hiding and Adapting.

### *-Silencing the Past*

The silencing of the cultural traumatic past in relationship emerged from the transcripts as a vital collective survival strategy. Although inquiry-participants perceived the traumatic past as impacting on the present and engineering a particular collective emotional world, there was a general consensus that there exists a collective unspoken rule forbidding its verbalization. The main silencing strategies discussed were those of avoiding intrapsychically and interpersonally, resisting and self-blaming.

Therese: *"All the positive things we can celebrate openly, I think...but I don't think anybody wants to think about those (colonization, Famine)"*.

Ailish: *"...I just think it's so huge, our whole history and then it's not just national, it's regional, and then it's the families. The family unit that we all come from, so and it's all about not talking about it, not thinking about it. It's happened, it's in the past"*.

Bríd: *"the Jews talk about the Holocaust. Do we talk about the Famine? No, it is kinda like we had that coming..."* (and in later session) *"My dad would have been 93 today actually, born in 1920, so his parents were born in the late 19<sup>th</sup> century so they would have known people directly affected. But my grandparents would have known people who died, who took the soup<sup>24</sup>, who took the ship<sup>25</sup>, and it really wasn't spoken about. It's another thing that we've had to repress..."*.

The unwanted emotions that did emerge found other channels of expression, i.e. singing and alcohol:

Joanne: *"I can think of a lot of men as you say that they would be singing their ballads and the emotions would come out"*.

Tom: *"you have fellas and when they have a few pints and they're smathering and crying and all of this stuff is inside them that's, that's coming out when it's utterly useless..."*.

Dermot: *"I never thought of that. My father used to drink and sing just wonder, I never thought about that before, but it is about the way that he's expressing feelings and that"*.

The shame, loss and guilt were repressed in the past, and, as was recognized during the inquiry and dialogue, many of these emotions still continued to be repressed by the participants also within this English context. This became apparent in the painful struggle we encountered in naming and reflecting on our emotions. It was as if an invisible force silenced us in our efforts to verbalize our experiences.

One inquiry-participant conceptualized addiction in Ireland in terms of a survival strategy in dealing with the historical burden of survivor guilt.

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<sup>24</sup> In 1847, soup kitchens sponsored by local relief committees and by groups such as the Quakers opened to feed the Famine victims. This often meant relinquishing or 'betraying' the Catholic faith for food.

<sup>25</sup> Emigrated.

Tom: *"Addiction is a way of dealing with feelings, and that combination of the extent to which the, I suppose Irish society had a very intense relationship with the drink and at the same time the survivor guilt from the time of the Famine".*

This sense of breaking the unspoken rule by talking about the shared historical past between Ireland and England also became evident in the inquiry process. There was a sense that it was still too recent or indeed still present in the here- and-now. I felt it too in the initial stages of my research planning. I was overcome by a sense that I was taking on the role of the rebel, the trouble-maker or law-breaker by examining the theme. In retrospect, I believe this was linked to a fear of being treated as a subversive, a terrorist. I was conscious that revolution in Irish history has seldom led to victory, but, on the other hand, I was aware that it had led to an eventual restructuring of political structures.

Some of the participants similarly described the verbalizing of the historical past as a type of revolutionary, daring act. Joanne spoke of the inquiry as a means of *'starting something'*. Ailish referred to dialoguing on her cultural background as *'taking a stand'* in England and, in doing so, spoke of *'waving her (Irish) name like a banner'* in dialogue with English counterparts on her training course. Therese and Bríd used similar words and tones:

Therese: *"but one of the football World Cups and Angola were playing against Portugal and they were saying oh, look how tough it is for people to have to, you know, play against their oppressors, you know. And England were playing against Ireland and nobody was saying anything about it. [Dermot laughs]...the chap I was going out with at the time was English and I was saying, like, so why aren't they (English) saying oh, look the Irish they're oppressed...and he was saying they wouldn't dare. You know".*

Bríd: *"I think we have started something that could lead to a revolution...we can start a revolution".*

#### *-Adopting a Strict Moral Code*

Adopting a strict moral code emerged from the data as a further resource in survival. This moral code was asserted by all inquiry-participants to be maladaptive in the present. The rigid, punitive code, constructed from Catholic dogma, was portrayed by a number of inquiry-participants as having prevented a descent into chaos and hopelessness in the midst of the trauma. It was as if Catholicism offered a rigid, rule-bound structure that provided a resource when all other known structures were falling apart. It served the purpose of dealing with traumatic experiencing:

Therese: *"For me that (moral code) comes like some kind of either religion thing or maybe if you have nothing you can have pride and you can do things the right way. I don't know but I feel very affected by it. I think that it's a very kind of real thing" (and later) "for me the Catholic Irish bit like I think it, like what you say, I think it's hard to prise apart our culture and our Irishness and our Catholicism. I think. But for me the word punitive comes in. So I think, I suppose for me I think we've probably handled it historically punitively, so that feels like it's suited our character".*

A central Catholic belief of a rewarding afterlife provided some with hope in a painful existence. There was a promise that the suffering would be rewarded if *'offered up'*.

Bríd: *"(not) to really go to existential pain, sure it will be alright in the next life, it will be, you know".*

Catholicism was also found to be a source of pride vis-à-vis the English Other, particularly in the English context:

Ailish: *"what I think in terms of, I felt I carried that Catholic martyr when I came over here that there's also an arrogance about it too, actually, you know...(there is a) belief that we are spiritually, you know, far higher than our English neighbours. Our English neighbours are decadent, you know they're promiscuous. You know all the kind of 'isms'" and later "we were better spiritually and morally".*

Dermot: *"then the Protestant school, primary school, was only about 200 yards away...I can remember thinking...that is sort of scurrilous territory and I used to think that they were sort of on a different planet, they were sort of on unholy...I didn't feel that word then but the only word I can think is that they were unholy, these Protestants, the Protestant English down the road. I felt incredibly superior actually. Going to a Catholic primary school. There is that superior, this sort of...morally, morally, morally better...morally better than....morally better than...I had no doubt about that...they even had a (street ) name that resonated with them being immoral".*

Catholicism in the English context thus appeared to provide a tool for differentiating oneself from the English Other in addition to a part-identity in this English context through which, at times, first- and second-generation Irish experienced a sense of superiority towards their English counterparts.

#### *-Hiding and Adapting*

Hiding Irishness in relationship with English counterparts while developing an anglicized self emerged from the analysis as an essential survival strategy in ensuring economic security in the colonial period. A paradoxical sense emerged during the analysis that survival and freedom necessitated the acceptance of oppression. Survival and acceptance in the new colonial order involved the formal rejection of Irish culture in relationship with the colonizer. The inquiry-participants reflected on how work was given to those who succeeded in becoming English in name and language.

Ailish: *"my mother was saying she actually changed her name to an English name in order to get work, it wasn't good to have a name called Mairead".*

Bríd: *"My dad was called Jack by his wife and friends, some of them, Sean by certain others, and John in work".*

Therese: *"...my mother was educated in Irish, but my grandmother, she never learned Irish at all. I was horrified. She was born, I think, at the end of the 1800s and so I so thought it's your*

*own country it's still totally inherited past, you know, because you wouldn't have to change your name amongst in theory Irish people...so its still the colonial past reason".*

The cost of survival was the loss of the Irish language and culture.

#### *4.1.2 The Irish-English Cultural Relational in English Context*

The category 'Irish-English Relational in an English context' surfaced as a figural construct in the conceptualization of the therapeutic work between a 'white' Irish client and a white English therapist. The roots of this relationship were understood as firmly planted in the Irish-English historical relational.

##### *4.1.2.1 Struggling with an Ambivalent Identity: Hybridity*

The data suggested that a cultural relational blueprint of the colonial split between Ireland and England had been internalized. Inquiry-participants described themselves as occupying an ambivalent space in terms of identity. They spoke of themselves as hybrid beings but often reflected on experiencing a duality in their identity. Some first-generation inquiry-participants described an existence between an Irish and an English identity:

*Joanne: "I felt a long time that I am hybrid, neither one or the other (English or Irish)...in an in-between space".*

The majority of first-generation participants described themselves as feeling distinctly Irish but adapted in the English relational context:

*Therese: "(I) feel very Irish even though I think I've become a little bit more of a chameleon".*

Both second-generation Irish, who had English accents, described a feeling of being torn internally between irreconcilable Irish and English identities, which created an intrapsychic turmoil.

*Dermot: "(in) Ireland I used to defend the English and when in England I defend the Irish. I have struggled all my life" (and in the following session) "I think the last time I told that when I was in Ireland I am thought of as being English and I'm not thought of being Irish here. It's a loss really, it's just a loss. It's a loss that one experiences".*

The image of Dermot as an 11-year-old travelling alone by boat across the Irish Sea between his split family seemed to symbolize a precarious existence caught between two identities:

*Dermot: "Walking about the boat in the middle of the Irish Sea by myself, you know, in the middle of the night. Just a railing there".*

##### *4.1.2.2 Feeling Culturally Different in Relationship*

Mirroring the intrapsychic struggle with an ambivalent identity, was a clearly felt sense of cultural difference in interpersonal interaction with English counterparts in the English context.



Ailish: *"But you had that awareness of difference from a very young age, really from a very young age, that difference in the two cultures".*

Bríd: *"...the colonial piece is the big difference, that there is the persecutor-victim".*

In the initial session, the conversation often revolved around general stereotypes, which reflected a collectively constructed chasm between the two cultures. The 'English' stereotype communicated distance, formality, reserve, detachment, rejection, privacy, the image of a 'castle'.

Bríd: *"(the English communicate) reserve, my home, my castle and you stay there, I stay here".*

The 'Irish' stereotype transmitted a sense of closeness, informality, warmth, attachment, acceptance, sociability or the image of a 'kitchen':

Joanne: *"I found myself drawing...an Irish hearth and people huddled in conversation by it, it was such powerful image. I had no idea I had this...and the story-telling...and the attentiveness..."*

The stereotypical images were described as being transmitted down the generations in Irish society and appeared to provide an experiential framework for future encounters:

Ailish: *"We heard from Dad and the teachers that they (English) are formal, reserved, and he used to say it is very hard to make friends with English...when I came over, that was my experience. I see that as being defended, people defend themselves by being detached, formal, reserved and not letting anyone in, whereas the people I grew up with were spontaneous".*

One inquiry-participant described what she recognized as an unusually positive image of the 'English' she had internalized in her childhood. Her mother had trained as a nurse in England and met her Irish husband there before returning.

Joanne: *"My mother worked over here and had a fabulous time when she was a young woman over here, it was parties and fun...so that would have seeped through to me...I went to England and ended up meeting an Englishman...but my friends over there (Ireland) were taken aback, what is your mother going to think about that...she had a very different stance than maybe a lot of Irish mothers..."*

As the inquiry progressed, stereotypes were subjected to further reflection and became increasingly nuanced:

Tom: *"(living in Ireland) was like living in a big kitchen. There was absolutely no privacy".*

Bríd: *"...coming over here...somehow a bit of freedom...and the other side of freedom is indifference..."*

As the inquiry progressed further, the felt sense of difference relied even less on stereotypical imagery and appeared to flow more from reflection on personal felt experiencing. This subjective sense of difference fell into four main sub-categories: Communicating Differently, Experiencing Discrimination, Identifying with Marginalized Identities and Encountering the Intercultural Emotional.

### - Communicating Differently

Both first- and second-generation 'white' Irish clients articulated a variety of differences in language use and meaning, which often led to misunderstandings in the interactional space.

Tom: *"...it was only in recent years that we (Tom and English partner) began to discover the very different ways we use language and the extent to which my language—I speak both Irish and English—has been quite shaped by Irish idioms and I think maybe it is with all Irish people..."* (and) *"my use of language which for her didn't have enough 'I' statements in it...the Irish language doesn't have those words".*

One of the main differences in communication that emerged from the data was the indirect interactional pattern Irish adopted in relationship with English counterparts, which was contrasted with a more direct pattern exhibited by their English counterparts.

Tom: *"It (Hiberno-English) has a much more oblique way of coming at personal experience".*

Bríd: *"...we speak English differently and we associate different meanings with words. Irish people often say yes when we mean no...not wanting to be rude, but English might see that as being devious whereas the English say no and Irish see that as very rude".*

### -Experiencing Discrimination

Emerging clearly from the analysis was an awareness of a discriminatory process against those perceived as Irish in England. The inquiry-participants understood this process to have its roots in a colonial past and to continue unchecked into present-day English society, albeit in more subtle ways.

Dermot: *"....when I was a lad I was sort of ridiculed as being, what's the word there, don't know but laughed at, I think. You know, that sense of the English laughing at the Irish. They're stupid, just stupid Irish...still have that residue of that, these days..."*

Ailish: *"Yeah, being thick, the Irish being thick and stupid".*

Therese: *"...Amadán (Irish for fool)...Like eejits (Hiberno-English for fool)".*

Bríd: *"Yes, eejits, eejits. We're eejits".*

The data analysis indicated two distinct discriminatory stereotypes assumed to be held by white English counterparts: the amusing 'clown/comic' and the aggressive 'murderer'. Inquiry-participants discussed the fact that whereas the clown/comic was the object of laughter for the 'English', the 'murderer' stereotype imparted Irishness with a certain 'seriousness'. Whereas the 'clown/comic' stereotype was reported as being alive and widely accepted in present-day English society, it was shared that the 'murderer' stereotype had lost much of its potency since the Good Friday Peace Agreement and the ending of 'The Troubles' (see Fig. 2.1).

Bríd: *"...they'd (English) got this dichotomy in their minds that we were either clowns or murderers...the IRA probably kept them on their toes for a while...in terms of taking us seriously".*

It was established on reflection in the course of the inquiry that it is exclusively the unthreatening 'clown/comic' stereotype, which is portrayed in the media<sup>26</sup>:

Gerry: *"...I've often wondered where is the Irish (in the media)".*

Bríd: *"Comics, comics, comics".*

Dermot: *"There must be some connection, mustn't there".*

Bríd: *"It's like we're not threatening, we're really funny and, you know, that bit of it too".*

The main signifiers of difference were identified as accent and language use among the first-generation Irish.

Bríd: *"If I use the turn of phrase that might be more identified with Hiberno-English, people laugh or make a joke and it's happened in the therapy context..."*.

Among the second-generation Irish, names were perceived as the main signifier of Irishness and thus difference.

Dermot: *"I don't feel the education system, that actually I was taken seriously, just because of my name".*

Experiences of discrimination appeared to have been internalized by the inquiry-participants and become woven into the intrapsychic split between the Irish and English. A second-generation inquiry-participant discloses his own reaction to an 'expert' with an Irish accent being interviewed on BBC:

Dermot: *"I felt sort of embarrassed...I felt the English people would take no notice of him. And that's quite deep, isn't it...Nobody will take this guy seriously because I sort of sensed how English people would view having an Irish accent".*

In the data, contrasting experiences of Irishness in varying cultural backgrounds hinted at a complex intrapsychic pattern. While Dermot spoke of shame vis-à-vis the Irish accent in an English context, he experienced it as comforting in an Irish context. There appeared to be a split between the affective experiencing of an Irish accent in public domain of the English context and that of the familial or domestic domain within the home.

Dermot: *"I could listen to my (Irish) grandmother talk all day...it feels real...it feels...down to earth...feels poetic at times".*

#### *-Identifying with Marginalized Identities:*

This feeling of difference was also evident from the strong natural identification with marginalized identities, which was reported by all inquiry-participants. This identification was understood as being rooted in a shared history of colonization and discrimination at the hands of the English, historically and currently:

Ailish: *"I always identified with being the underdog, identified with the colonized. My ex-husband is from G. and my sister is married to a S<sup>27</sup>...we didn't consciously go into*

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<sup>26</sup> Television programmes such as *Father Ted*, *Dylan Moran*, *Shameless*, *The Frank*, *Mrs Brown's Boys*.

*relationships thinking I like you because we have a common enemy...let's get them back...it was all subconscious stuff".*

In interaction with English counterparts, a process of bonding was identified, which seemed to necessitate forming an internal alliance with a 'non-English' part-identity of the English Other. It appeared that an alliance between the Irish and English cultural identities was deemed impossible. Some other identity had to be found with which a bond could be formed:

Bríd: "(I form) *an alliance with (the) English, when they have an identity beyond their Englishness*".

Bríd explained, for example, that her English counterparts often disclosed 'minority identities', such as "*her father is a craft-worker from (an island off the English coast)*". As I moved through the analysis, there emerged from the findings a clear distinction within Englishness. The sense of cultural difference and of a colonial relational appeared to emerge mostly when interacting with perceived 'white', 'middle class' 'English':

Gerry: "*I know I feel threatened with people I perceive as really English, middle- and upper-middle class*"

On the other hand, the inquiry-participants communicated identifying with working-class English:

Bríd: "*I am glad in some way that the English are the last of their colonized people...they are colonizing themselves...they keep their working-class people in a particular place*".

#### *-Encountering the Intercultural Emotional*

On analysis of the data, it also became clear that the 'white' Irish clients encountered a myriad of difficult emotions related to their Irishness in interaction with English counterparts. This emotional burden was portrayed as being carried over from the past historical and experiential and as bringing with it further expectations of discrimination. The emotional package emerged from the data as a constant presence with the potential to unravel in the relational space between Irishness and Englishness.

All inquiry-participants recounted incidents in which the foregrounding of their Irishness was accompanied by feelings of shame and inferiority:

Dermot: "*...I know when my parents used to visit me and friends used to come round that used to be in the back of my mind, I wonder will they take them seriously. So it's very deep this stuff actually*".

Whereas shame was communicated as a 'safe' emotion to experience and contain in interaction with English counterparts, anger was presented as more difficult to verbalize:

Ailish: "*(There was) a lot of anger. I realized I was carrying my past and my history and Ireland's past and history into this (relational) space...Yeah, it took a long time and a lot of*

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<sup>27</sup> Both countries are former English colonies.

*that was because it was awareness, the differences, because I was not ready to acknowledge the difference...to own my Irishness, that was quite challenging”.*

This reluctance to express anger was evidenced across the inquiry most vividly in non-verbal markers:

Dermot: *“...she made some comment about bogs that I could not believe, and it was racist. I have an English accent (pause) but I bristled (slowly, quietly) (pause) I bristled (quietly)”.*

Bríd: *“(on her reaction on being told an Irish joke by an English counterpart) the mutate and survive bit where you, where I might just ignore it or maybe even collude (with jokes) which feels shameful (pause) or I get angry (quietly)”.*

The visceral quality of these disclosures was rich. In Dermot’s recounting of this particular incident of discrimination, I was struck by the shift in bodily terms that the memory of this discriminatory comment called forth in the here-and-now of the inquiry. Dermot’s body appeared to move into defensive readiness in the remembering.

In session three, this inquiry-participant disclosed that in one instance, instead of colluding and being shamed, she had confronted her counterpart. Rather than being shamed herself in the interactional space, she experienced her confrontational reaction as a shaming experience for her counterpart:

Bríd: *“I actually had to take on a trainer at one point who thought in his wisdom that telling an Irish joke was a good move...in the context of a therapy training, it was bang out of order. And it took a lot of courage but I did confront this guy. And I encouraged him to stop and think of his joke if he substituted the word black or disabled, or you know, choose your minority group...I think he was embarrassed”.*

#### *4.1.2.3 Managing Cultural Difference in Relationship*

The analysis shows that the ‘white’ Irish inquiry-participants understood colonization as a collective relational traumatic experiencing. The data suggested that this experiencing continues to impact on the ‘white’ Irish cultural self in the relational space with white English cultural selves in the English context. However, all inquiry-participants articulated the necessity of avoiding the themes of historical relational and cultural difference in managing these relationships. The main tactics employed in managing the cultural relational were identified as: ‘Silencing’, ‘Hiding’ and ‘Becoming Other’ (‘white’, English, middle-class).

##### *-Silencing*

From the beginning of the inquiry, inquiry-participants described an active silencing of the historical relational and the associated felt sense of difference when interacting with English counterparts. This process was understood in terms of a collective cultural collusion in avoiding these difficult transgenerational intercultural emotions, which in turn were described as both ‘dark’ and ‘shadowy’:

Therese: *“...people over here don't want to talk about the difference, they don't want to discriminate, sensitivity between the English and Irish, don't want to say the wrong thing and*

*people want to say, we are all the same, normalizing...it's (colonization) way too close in history years...it's a bit of a minefield and so it might be easier just to leave it alone, you know, just like, just to kind of not mention it...The Irish-English Thing, it's not a comfortable topic".*

*Ailish: "It's easy to talk about the good stuff but difficult the darker...it (historical past) is darker and difficult" (and) "It is that whole side of our culture that isn't spoken about and we (Irish) collude with that..."*

Emerging from these data was a sense of a split-off emotional world, which the co-participants had learned to keep hidden, repressed in the shadows of their intrapsychic.

As the inquiry progressed and matured, some inquiry-participants shared their fear of unleashing an unwanted intercultural emotional world of shame or anger in dialoguing on the historical relational and cultural difference with English counterparts. There was a sense communicated in the data that showing such emotions could have unwelcome consequences, namely rejection or retaliation. These dialogues were to be avoided:

*Therese: "I think it's not being good enough, it's not measuring up, it's being flawed in some ways. It's being, like holding onto the past...it's not the same...I know difference should be embraced but...if you think difference is shadowy and openly maybe then it's hard to embrace it and I suppose the thing is...will the people (English) understand and will they accept it".*

*Brid: "I'd say maybe rather than it feeling scary, it definitely feels safer to keep a handle on that whatever that darkness is, that sort of, the darker kind of edge to feelings, the darker scales of the spectrum. It feels safer to keep that among our own type thing. Because I suppose, I don't know which is worse, them (English) thinking us ridiculous or them being scared of us, because when they're scared of people they treat people they're scared of very badly. You know, appearing not to be a threat is probably not a bad move if you're not British".*

Second-generation Irish inquiry-participants shared how their parents encouraged them to hide cultural difference when in interaction with English counterparts:

*Gerry: "I'm just thinking about the message that my mum used to give me about not causing a fuss or rocking the boat...and don't want to provoke anger...in terms of the fitting in...don't upset people".*

Also found repeatedly in the data was evidence of difficulty for the inquiry-participants in expressing their experiences of the intercultural process in words. I sensed that the search for words in the intersubjective space reflected what appeared to be an unresolved intrapsychic conflict. It was as if this was the first time that these themes had been thought about, let alone verbalized:

*Gerry: "I am wanting more...I can't quite...I am losing the words now".*

*Joanne: "... they were the discriminated against or the minority...whatever...I have lost my train of thought now,(pause) I am conscious (pause) I am jumping all over the place".*

'Silencing' was also evidenced in the difficulty that inquiry-participants had in verbalizing their intercultural emotional world, as if the words were being found for the first time in the dialogue:

*Dermot: "I didn't feel that word then but the only word I can think is that they were unholy"*

*Brid: "I find this hard to put into words..."*

Tom: *"I think I'm very conscious of where somebody will be, I wouldn't say being kind of, I suppose, maybe racist is too strong a word, anti-Irish would be too strong a word, but like they would feel free saying it".*

### *-Hiding*

In facilitating the 'silencing', the inquiry-participants described a strategy of hiding. If Irishness could be hidden or only what were assumed the acceptable parts of Irishness presented to the English, then the difficult dialogue around difference and history could be avoided.

First-generation inquiry-participants reported the need to downplay their accents, avoid the use of Hiberno-English and hide the 'angry'/'murderous' part of their Irish selves in interaction with English counterparts:

Ailish: *"at that time for me there was a lot of shame around and it wasn't, it wasn't in my awareness so much but there was a sense of keep a low profile, keep your nose down, don't, don't, you know, mind your accent, speak, don't, you know, be conscious of saying cooker [(English accent)] rather than cooker [(Irish accent)], you know, sort of downplaying, sort of trying to be invisible, trying to be invisible, that's actually, there was this kind of judgement and hostility and, you know, insecurity. You felt quite insecure, you know. So it's, it is interesting that certainly at that time there was fear there and you were very conscious that you could be victimised or ridiculed..."*

Inquiry-participants asserted that the peace agreement had led to a slight improvement in the relationship:

Bríd: *"I came over in 1996...the year before the cease-fire...so...once the IRA stopped bombing, the relationship between the Irish and English became a bit warmer".*

A clear theme on analysis was what appeared to be the collective cultural strategy of presenting certain accepted persona while hiding others in interaction with English counterparts:

Therese: *"(Irish in England) are presenting personas..."*

Ailish (continuing): *"...that people want to see"*

The strategy of presenting the 'clown/comic' side of the cultural self while hiding the darker, threatening 'murderous' side emerged from the data as an essential survival strategy in interaction. When asked what appearing 'nonthreatening' meant for them, one inquiry-participant answered:

Bríd: *"appearing maybe a bit gullible"*

Appearing nonthreatening and funny was believed to facilitate acceptance:

Therese: *"I love showing the funny part of me. So I think that's completely acceptable, whereas I think like the scary, troublesome, angry part, I don't know if that would be..."*

Although all inquiry-participants described hiding their Irish part-selves, one inquiry-participant after many years in England shared how she began to face the challenge of owning her Irishness in interaction:

Ailish: *"... in the training...the whole thing about difference is based mainly on black and 'white' and I felt very strongly about being, standing up and saying this is the what it is like to be Irish. There is a difference and, and this is my history. It is very important for me to own my Irishness. That was quite challenging in some ways..."*

Second-generation Irish inquiry-participants described how parents encouraged them to adapt and conceal their Irishness in interaction with English counterparts:

Gerry: *"I think for many second-generation Irish they become, erm, probably more, more focused or more absorbed in terms of their Englishness"*.

Dermot: *"Irishness was not something you went around advertising" (and) "(my father said) be careful because of what you are singing because there will be English people here they may not like that. He was very alert to that"*.

The anglicized versions of names appeared to be used in families to avoid ridicule:

Gerry: *"I didn't hear the O'S (Hiberno-English pronunciation of name) until I was a teenager at school. I was shocked and I thought, felt like he (the teacher) was taking the mickey"*.

This drive to 'fit in' was experienced as impacting on development and restricting growth.

Dermot: *"in terms of going out of that Irish into the English, it was about you need to behave in a certain way, I don't know about the word behave, but you mustn't stand out. I think that affected me in my autonomy actually. I felt I had to fit into something rather than being part of it...that's very strong..."*.

#### *-Becoming Other*

As already outlined, a major theme that clearly ran through the inquiry was that of hiding Irish part-selves in interaction with English counterparts. This led to what inquiry-participants communicated in the inquiry as a sense of being 'invisible' as cultural entities among the English on the surface. This sense was strongest among the second-generation Irish inquiry-participants:

Gerry: *"...it's (difference) less visible...as an Irish person with an English accent so not so obvious"*.

Dermot: *"you are hidden as an Irish person, hidden amongst the English"*.

Throughout the data the inquiry-participants' assumptions around the image their English counterparts' hold of their Irish counterparts threw up the consistent image of 'the same' which the inquiry-participants expanded on to mean 'white' and 'middle-class'.

Ailish: *"Actually they didn't see me as any different from them, they just saw me as being 'white'"*.

Brid: *"There is a general you are kind of 'white', kind of middle class, kind of dominant group"*.

On further analysis of the data, however, I recognized a feeling that appeared to emerge among the inquiry-participants that this attitude of 'sameness' is superficial for both parties:

Therese: *"I think it is that I look the same..." (and) "maybe they (English) have to pretend it's all just, oh, we're all 'white', we're all Western, we're all, you know so similar" (and later)... "I am very aware of my Irishness, very aware of my difference"*.



One inquiry-participant, on further reflection, later suggested that this sense of ‘sameness’ and ‘otherness’ hinted at an internalization of a more complex, enmeshed process. Rather than being perceived as a separate, equal subject, the ‘Irish’ appeared to be internalized by the English Other as a complementary object, which they can define as desired:

Brid: *“the English...they almost see us as being more part of them”.*

Gerry follows on from Brid’s comment to suggest that the Irish tend to collude in the process:

Gerry: *“Yeah...(Irish) people probably assimilated stronger than I’d like because I think that means giving up rather than integrating...well, there is this, this mechanism for defining people that’s imposed upon (them)”.*

This process of ‘becoming other’ was accompanied by a feeling of loss and loneliness by both first- and second-generation inquiry-participants:

Dermot: *“So it is in its (Irishness) absence (in England) that it is experienced. So just because one is not having experiences of Irishness doesn’t mean that it’s not occurring all the time actually. Do you see what I mean? It’s present. It’s present in its absence. Like mourning the absence”.*

#### *4.1.3 The Irish-English Therapeutic Relational*

The findings have highlighted the importance of the Irish-English historical relational as a framework for experiencing and understanding the cultural relationship between ‘white’ Irish and white English cultural selves in the English context. Analysis of the data also revealed that the influence of the historical relational seeped down through societal structures into the Irish-English Therapeutic Relational. The historical relational was quoted consistently and self-evidently as the cultural backdrop to this therapeutic work.

Five of the inquiry-participants shared that they had worked previously or were working with an English therapist. One inquiry-participant, Joanne, explained that she had never worked with an English therapist<sup>28</sup>. It is important to note that a number of the inquiry-participants verbalized their association of ‘middle-class’ with the ‘white’ psychotherapy profession. This will have implications for the therapeutic space, as one of the surprising findings for me was the fact that the co-participants experienced intercultural difficulties predominantly vis-à-vis English Others, whom they perceived as middle-class and upper-class. In contrast, the co-participants felt that they bonded with working-class English, who were like the Irish, perceived as victims of the English system.

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<sup>28</sup> Joanne had indicated previously that although she did not meet the criterion of having worked with an English therapist, she still wished to partake in the research. I was interested to discover why this had not been the case. Was Joanne avoiding a confrontation? Interestingly, Joanne was also the only participant who decided against participating in the workshop with white English therapists.

#### 4.1.3.1 Experiencing the Silenced Past

All inquiry-participants who had worked with an English therapist disclosed that there had never been a dialogue revolving around the shared historical past and associated cultural differences with their therapist. Only one participant described working through this relationship in her therapy, albeit never verbally with the therapist:

*Ailish: "everything came up in that relationship in terms of what I was bringing...not just what was going on for me in the here and now but in terms of what she represented for me...there was a lot of anger...I was carrying my past and my history and Ireland's past and history...into this space..." (and later) "my journey was to actually have to sort of face all those 'isms' within myself...in terms of Englishness and Irishness and class...it did take years and I did try and avoid it..."*

Ailish disclosed later in an email exchange that she had never shared this process with her therapist while expressing regret that this lack of acknowledgement by both parties of a possible existence of a felt difference on Ailish's part may have limited the therapeutic work:

*Ailish: "she never did bring up the issue of my Irishness and her Englishness. It would have made it easier because the acknowledgement of our differences would have been a huge permission to open up so much in that space"*

In contrast to Ailish, another inquiry-participant spoke of an unvoiced rage she still harboured for her English therapist. She contrasted a disempowering relationship with her white English therapist with a more equal relationship established with a Scottish therapist:

*Brid: "it was a tough old grind, four years with this woman...we worked in the shadowy places I think a lot of the time...she was a bit of a bitch frankly, even aside from being a therapist or English or anything and (pause) as I reflect on it I don't know how much my ethnicity or nationality had to bear there. I do know she did get a kick out of making me feel uncomfortable talking about sex...I think ultimately it was kind of useful. I worked with another British therapist after that but she was from Edinburgh so we had the Celtic kind of connection....we kinda shared an outsider view kind of things..."*

The rage remained unresolved:

*Brid: "I am still feeling it as I am here at the moment...I feel a little bit of rage in here (stomach) as I think she knew about...It was so disempowering..."*

Although the inquiry-participants reflected that this aspect of the relational had remained unexplored, they asserted that the 'missed' cultural difference impacted upon therapy:

*Gerry: "...I don't believe we have ever brought...into the room the difference between us (pause) and I do wonder about where we might miss each other or where he might miss me"*

*Dermot: "there are differences in the culture...I am wondering what I leave outside the therapy room in counselling that I could bring in...and that is valuable..."*

*Ailish: "...something about the difference...with that kind of awkwardness and difficulty because it is the big elephant in the room"*

Many inquiry-participants described how the therapeutic bond was co-constructed on the basis of cultural similarities. The Irish client was understood as forming an implicit alliance with a minority

self-identity (e.g. working-class origins, being different from the dominant group, religious interests), which was perceived as separate from the English majority self-identity. In this way, an intercultural confrontation with the 'English identity' could be avoided:

Bríd: *"They will often share the minority other aspect of their own that their father was actually a craft-worker from...or, you know, that they maybe shared their sense of being fraudulent somehow. And that there is a twinship that you're slightly off-beam and I kind of am as well and understands that sometimes that sense of (therapist thinking that) identifying with your otherness can open up a way to intimacy. And the fact that on the other side of it, I suppose that if they want to embrace you as part of their kind of comfortable middle class, that that's also possible".*

Tom: *"I think having the religious background in common made a bit of a difference in that therapy. I wasn't as conscious of the (cultural) difference as such..."*

#### 4.1.3.2 Fearing Oppression

All inquiry-participants shared a sense of cultural self, particular to the relational space with white English therapists. Each time we spoke about this intercultural space, an atmosphere of sadness and resignation entered the inquiry. The cultural self in this particular constellation was experienced as occupying an 'oppressed'/'victim' position:

Gerry: *"with my English therapist, I can feel fearful if I come in with that one-down attitude because of where I come from".*

##### -Being Shamed

Many of the inquiry-participants expressed a fear of being laughed, shamed and of feeling 'inferior' in interaction with the white English therapist, particularly when the cultural relational became foregrounded.

Therese: *"The exception would be we never spoke about the past histories between England or Ireland. Like if she used a word I didn't understand, we never spoke about where that might take me to and how I might feel inferior" (and) "...that kind of sits with me...the feeling of inferior and I think that could come up either in the transference or for real that I am inferior to this person sitting opposite me in the room".*

Ailish: *"And for me, I certainly was that very little quiet Irish person who was lacking in confidence and did feel inferior".*

Bríd: *"If I use the turn of phrase that might be more identified with Hiberno-English, people laugh or make a joke and it's happened in the therapy context".*

A revealing exchange in the course of the last session of the inquiry summed up the Irish inquiry-participants' deep fear of being shamed by their white English therapists in the therapy space:

Bríd: *"I feel very sad at the moment actually. This is a very sad turn in our journey. Because it's true, I think this is true. There's something about this being at the heart of it. The jokes, being laughed at".*

Gerry: *"There's obviously, there's a lot of material in that room in terms of the Irish interpretation as the kind of, the butt of many, many jokes..." [(several: hmm, hmm, agree).]*

### *-Being Missed*

In addition to the fear of being shamed in this cultural difference, there was also a sense throughout that they felt their Irish selves missed by the white English counterpart:

Ailish: *"the whole thing about difference is based mainly on black and white" (and later sharing her experience of speaking of the cultural difference in a therapy training group) "it was a matter of educating the group because actually they did not see me as any different to them, you know. They just saw me as being 'white'. My accent is different but they lack of knowledge..."*.

Both second-generation Irish inquiry-participants who were educated in England communicated a certain missing piece in their knowledge of the historical relational between Ireland and England:

Gerry: *"I'm just thinking for me how much of my history I don't know about"*.

As a consequence of this missing piece of historical information, a number of inquiry-participants asserted that the white English therapist assumed no cultural difference:

Therese: *"The assumptions could be that we're exactly the same...that the whole history thing isn't an issue anymore because it's all fine now [(laughs)]...I think there is the thing that sometimes the problems seem to be more ours, you know, as in that we perceive them to be a problem and we know the history and lots of us, I suppose, want to remember it, whereas I think here (England) they don't see the culture that comes in with us. Maybe they expect me to be in their frame of reference"*.

This, many believed, led to a specific relational dynamic being missed in the space:

Gerry: *"...it (the historical) has to be acknowledged in the room...because if there is not a dialogue about it in the therapy, there is something very important being missed, it's the transference"*.

One major factor which the inquiry-participants stressed was missed in the white English therapists' conceptualization of the therapeutic work was the role played by Catholicism. While some inquiry-participants stressed how important it was for the therapist to understand the influence of Catholicism in Irish life, it was equally important to others that they would not be stereotyped as 'guilt-ridden' Irish Catholics:

Joanne: *"I think the Catholic thing looms...I have the sense of 'Irish' being seen as you've had a Catholic upbringing, you have had a Catholic schooling...I think that a therapist would be sort of thinking about, you know, I suppose, the whole guilt thing; a lot of therapists of an Irish client might be holding that in terms of that background and what that means" (and) "there's the oppression of the nuns and convents"*.

Tom: *"They talk about us as Irish and I think there's a very big consciousness now of the priest, the paedophile priest; there's a much bigger awareness of that..."*.

Therese: *"...and I was expecting her to have an older, Irish Catholic idea of things..."*.

There was a definite sense that Catholicism as an influential factor in developmental experiencing was important but misunderstood. A number of inquiry-participants alluded to bigger relational picture of which 'Catholicism' was not figural but just one interchangeable construct.

Tom: *"...that was an enormously traumatic experience for a nation and that it will have left its generational and an intergenerational mark, you know. So I think those feelings (guilt and shame) it's interesting...I can't say that about Catholicism..."*

A number of inquiry-participants spoke of language and communication differences leading to a missing in different ways. The inquiry-participants agreed, for example, that the Irish have a more indirect form of communication than their English counterparts. This difference was understood as arising from the historical relational. This difference in communication was identified as continuing to impact on the relationship in the here-and-now, including that of therapy:

Brid: *"I have been told: 'you obviously have a problem with getting to the heart of things'. And I found it really humbling, well, actually very shameful when it was pointed out to me that I wasn't capable of intimacy and I thought God, if there's anything I can do it's that..." (and) "...we have our ways that we might be going at things obliquely...It would be crude and anti-therapeutic to rip away that defence too quickly, you know"*

#### *4.1.3.3 Becoming Other*

Although all inquiry-participants shared a deep felt sense of cultural difference in interaction with white English therapists, whether in training, group or individual therapy, this difference was assumed to be beyond the white English therapists' awareness due to the 'whiteness' at skin level:

Ailish: *"the whole thing about difference is based mainly on black and white"*

Gerry: *"...and I suppose it could be, it's (cultural difference) less visible for us as Irish people and as an Irish person with an English accent so not so obvious"*

Therese: *"The assumption could be that we're exactly the same...that we'd be the same"*

A struggle emerged in the data between a 'sameness' and a 'difference'. Whereas the inquiry-participants felt culturally different to white English therapists at a deeper level, 'sameness' at skin level appeared to defend against opening a Pandora's Box of unwanted emotions. In each story, which weaved its way through the data, an avoidance of confronting the historical colonial relationship and the associated emotional world of cultural difference in interaction with the white English therapist became evident. In so doing, the inquiry-participants appeared to experience themselves as succeeding in appearing 'the same' in the difference. This was, however, accompanied by a sense of their cultural selves often 'being missed' in the relational process. The cultural relational difference existed in the room, but it appeared to be conceptualized as consciously experienced and held only by the 'white' Irish client. There was an assumption that although, at some level, the white English therapists still played into the colonial process, this was out of their awareness. The 'white' Irish client, on the other hand, was assumed to be very aware of this colonial process living in the room. In all accounts of their therapeutic experiences, the cultural difference seemed to be hidden within a cultural 'sameness', which the inquiry-participants believed their white English therapists assumed in the work.

#### *4.1.4 Living the Historical Relational in the Present*

The higher-order concept of 'living the historical relational in the present' emerged from across the three main categories in the form of an internal tension between the inquiry-participants' desire to have their Irish self seen and need to avoid the trauma of their Irish self being seen.

This tension seemed to have been constructed within the Irish-English colonial relationship. The Irish cultural self was believed to be perceived by the coloniser as a 'self of little worth'. Irish culture had no value in relationship and was not taken seriously except in its rebellious and confrontational form, which inevitably invited retaliation. The English culture became the economic currency of that world. The Irish cultural self had to be suppressed to ensure economic survival:

*Ailish: "It's not even 100 years and you're talking; my mother was saying she actually changed her name to an English name in order to get work".*

The devastating trauma of the Famine brought forth an overwhelming sense of shame and loss and sense of inferiority:

*Therese: "it was a terribly shameful thing to happen and I think like it could, it's like a lot of other things but also nobody wants to be poor and nobody wants to be starving and nobody wants to lose half their population..."*

The English represented the oppressor but also the saviour, since food would be provided for those relinquishing their Catholic faith. The Irish self and its emotional world were suppressed in relationship, in the service of survival.

The colonial relationship, together with this internal tension between desire to be seen and need to avoid being seen by English counterparts, appears to have been internalized as an interactional blueprint for survival in relationship:

*Ailish: "...and there was something about at that time for me, there was a lot of shame around and it wasn't, it wasn't in my awareness so much but there was a sense of keep a low profile, keep your nose down, don't, don't, you know, mind your accent..."*

The inquiry-participants shared their struggle with ambivalent identities in the Irish-English relational context. That they felt different in relationship was stressed in the inquiry but hidden behind a mask of sameness in the Irish-English relationship. They described the discrimination that their Irish self attracts and the acceptance that seeming to be white English was believed to win:

*Gerry: "...some (Irish) people probably assimilated stronger than I'd like because I think that means giving up rather than integrating".*

This tension also entered the Irish-English therapeutic relational. Although the cultural difference was felt in the relationship, it was not acknowledged due to the shame, loss, rage and sense of inferiority that explicit focus on colonial dynamics triggers.

Gerry: *"I recognize that on an unconscious level I could be going down the road...ahh...they have greater status...hmmm... which isn't just about two human beings in that room...it is about millions of people...and hundreds of years of history".*

While the co-participants depicted themselves as avoiding the past and the cultural difference it engineered in relationship, they also shared the loss in the avoidance.

Dermot: *"So just because one is not having experiences of Irishness doesn't mean that it's not occurring all the time actually...It's present in its absence. Like mourning the absence".*

## 4.2 Dialoguing

### 4.2.1 Introduction

Prior to the actual dialogue, there was an interesting discussion on the prospect of dialoguing with the white English therapists on the inquiry's emerging themes. The majority of inquiry-participants shared their fear of being attacked or shamed in such a dialogue. Some shared their need to be vigilant and protect themselves. One inquiry-participant (Joanne) decided against participating.

Brid: *"I'd say maybe rather than it feeling scary, it definitely feels safer to keep a handle on that whatever that darkness is, that sort of, the darker kind of edge to feelings, the darker scales of the spectrum. It feels safer to keep that among our own type thing....I feel the need to protect myself..."*

Dermot: *"I thought that they'll just laugh actually...it's really deep, the sense of they'll come in and just laugh"... "They'll go out and snigger behind our backs, as my mother used to say..."*

However, the majority of the inquiry-participants decided to participate in the dialogue. A sense of anger and challenge became evident as the dialogue approached:

Therese: *"I don't know. I'd love to know from these English therapists, you know, (pause) they'd be brave if they said they thought we were stupid".*

Brid: *"It wakes up a really aggressive part in me that wakes up if I thought that anyone (during the dialogue) would do such a thing (laugh at our inquiry findings), I just want to rip something up".*

This third section of the research findings focuses specifically on those emerging from my grounded theory analysis of the transcribed dialogue between the 'white' Irish client inquiry group and the white English therapist group. I have compiled a chart (Fig. 4.2), which provides an overview of emergent themes.



Fig. 4.2: Conceptual Model of 'white Irish' clients dialoguing with 'white English' therapists/counsellors in the cultural relational

This dialogue was held following the three-session inquiry process. A number of charts (Appendix 5) outlining the main themes arising from the inquiry were presented during the course of the dialogue. A focus was placed on the historical intercultural relational as it exists in the present relational in English society, with particular attention given to the therapeutic relationship. As was evidenced in the analysis of the inquiry, the dialogue was marked by a continuous fluid movement between the historical, the societal and the therapeutic levels in the experiencing and making sense of the cultural therapeutic relational.

Two categories unfolded in the course of the analysis. The 'white' Irish client group opened up the dialogue. This involved 'breaking the silence' identified in the course of the cooperative inquiry on the lived collective cultural trauma. The focus on the cultural relational from the outset of the dialogue gave way to the construction of a cultural dialogic space between both groups. The white English therapist responded ('entering the intercultural space') by sharing assumptions and stereotypes, disclosing the intercultural emotional world and experiencing the 'missing'. A further sub-category emerged from both groups vis-à-vis 'managing the intercultural dialogic space'. The interaction led to a process of 'making meaning in dialogue'.

#### 4.2.2 *Breaking the Silence ('White' Irish Clients)*

In entering the cultural relational, the 'white' Irish client group broke the silence on the lived collective cultural trauma. Throughout the dialogue, the space was used to expand on themes that had emerged as particularly pertinent in the inquiry. The enormity of breaking the silence was captured in the transcript:



Dermot: *"I have never been in a group where English and Irish people have spoken (pause) ever in my life".*

This collective cultural world of trauma defied verbalization.

Therese: *"Everything is so complicated, like the shadows there are so many of them. There is anger about these things happening and there is also shame and guilt, and you know that is what when Gary<sup>29</sup> was saying like it would only take us a couple of minutes to explain our culture...The emotions are so raw and so muddled like; it's so hard to describe them. I think for me they are more emotions and fear than anything properly than you can talk about".*

Bríd: *"...we come from places where just over 150 years ago, millions of people died of starvation and there were political reasons and all kind of reasons and even to speak about this, even as I speak about this (pause). It is not something that I speak about even".*

There appeared to be no discourse to hold such an intercultural dialogue in the interpersonal space of therapy.

Therese: *"I am very aware of...this shadow...of the fear of the Irish client...the fear of the English therapist to bring up any of the understandings...the misunderstandings...the transference and stuff...I think it is hard to think that way..."*

#### 4.2.2.1 Sharing Lived Collective Cultural Trauma

This sub-category emerged from the transcript as major theme in the dialogic space:

Gerry: *"I think the concept of trauma is very significant...it is generational trauma (Bríd: "yeah") where there is the history right through to sitting here and how does that reside in me?"*

The inquiry-participants initially focused on the trauma of Famine and took great pain in describing the 'scar' it had left on the psyche and the sacrifices it forced the Irish to make:

Therese: *"I don't want to be the people where millions died because of hunger. It is also a blot...it is not a nice thing...that's not something we are proud of and I think that is a dirty blot as well as a tragedy...and I think that is my shame around it is that it is a terrible thing to have in our history".*

Bríd: *"...there was also the option of taking food if you renounced your Catholicism...yeah...quite a few people did that in order to live".*

However, during the dialogue, there was a hesitancy to implicate the English colonizer directly in the tragedies that befell the Irish. One comment suggesting English responsibility was framed within a political discourse identified as removed from the individual and the here-and-now. The discourse constructed by the Irish at the time was attributed blame for the implication of the English in the historical tragedies. This led to an overriding sense of self-blame. The Irish were thus framed on one hand as a group avoiding its own culpability:

Tom: *"There was also that kind of political narrative about the economy at the time and quite easy to blame England".*

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<sup>29</sup> English therapist.

Perhaps at some level, there existed a fear of blaming too much, due to a risk of retaliation.

On the other hand, such a comment did indeed suggest an English involvement, but indirectly. Such an indirect communication has been identified as a means of protecting the Irish colonized self in interaction with the English colonizer.

Links were outlined between the trauma of colonial oppression and Famine and subsequent history down the generations and into the therapeutic space:

Bríd: *"I think there is the stain of also post-Famine...we were so weakened...we were so easily oppressed and that is why the Catholic Church...So we have a second wave of oppression...there something that we are attracting here...like that sense of 'easy to oppress'...and I think I can see how that played out for me in the therapeutic relationship. I do feel that my therapist was quite oppressive..."*

The inquiry-participants broke the silence further on the following themes:

- Their sense of shame, inferiority and rage vis-à-vis the once colonial power:

Therese: *"...so inferiority puts me. It doesn't put me in a good place. It makes me quite aggressive. It is not comfortable for me. I think there is a need to strike out a bit even if you don't bring it in to blame a little, you know everything it's to do with England..."*

Bríd: *"I do think there is a reservoir of rage...stuff that could be really destructive if I unleashed it kind of thing...Something internalized about being dangerous"*

- The Irish stereotypes assumed to be held by English counterparts:

Dermot: *"I have internalized throughout my life...and I have been born here and educated here...is that I am considered to be either dangerous or stupid...this is internalized quite deeply..."*

Tom: *"...not I hope in the therapy role, hmm, not frequently, but in my general interactions that I would generally fall into the fool, stupid or the clown role and just wonder...I find myself doing that quite easily..."*

- The adaptive process of 'Becoming Other'

Therese: *"I want to be the same...I don't want the shame of being different...don't want to embarrass myself if I don't pronounce my 'th's'...I don't want to do that ...I want to pronounce them because I want to be accepted"*

- Their sense of being missed by their English counterparts:

Therese: *"...I project a lot onto you, the English therapist...that I am listening to you and you are not aware of some of the stuff that I am projecting onto you...I am not good enough or smart enough or clever enough..."*

#### 4.2.2.2 Managing the Intercultural Dialogic Space ('White' Irish clients)

In 'managing the "white" Irish self in interaction' in the dialogue, the 'white' Irish clients appeared to rush in to protect their white English counterparts from any blame or anger. As Caroline began to reflect on why she believed the English are disliked abroad, Bríd reassured:

Caroline: *"...that goes back to. It is our shame, we tried to dominate the world and now we have the shame for what we did".*

Bríd: *"That was a British enterprise rather than an English".*

Caroline: *"It was the English that were taking".*

Bríd's interactional aim appeared to be to take the edge off Caroline's comment and thus avoid the difficult intercultural emotional world.

In listening to the tapes, I also became aware of the fact that the 'white' Irish clients laughed and joked more than their English counterparts. There were times when the 'white' Irish group detracted from a difficult piece by making a joke:

Matthew: *"...actually that for me creates the fear that I could so easily come across as oppressive, holding a lapsed idea, obviously, thinking it is still there but on hold...yeah".*

Bríd: *"I have never thought of it that way...my husband has a way of saying that...he says a collapsed Catholic" (laughter).*

Tom: *"You don't have relapsed Catholics" (more laughter).*

I was also aware of a particular manner of responding to the disclosure of certain discriminatory Irish stereotypes held in England:

Gary: *"Irish are either stupid...or you are dangerous...hmm...but I feel that does represent a very strong stereotype".*

Immediately following the disclosure, silence fell on the space and was broken only by what appeared to be a noncommittal interjection, which was, I felt, full of opinion and reflection but not agreement:

Bríd and Dermot: *"...mmm..."*

It took a while before a response to the disclosure was offered. In that time, Gary's words were sitting provocatively in the room begging a reaction. Finally, Dermot acknowledged the disclosure by expressing gratitude for what had been offered:

Dermot: *"...to hear you say that as an English person...really touches me actually...and thank-you for saying that...it sort of honours who I am actually..."*

However, in the countertransference, I felt it was not totally authentic but rather a means of perhaps responding in an accepted, safe fashion. Acceptance of oppression once again appeared to be a price paid for peace and freedom. Thus, the sense of discontent that I intuited sat with the Irish inquiry-participants was hidden, a contentious issue avoided, by gracious pleasing words.

#### 4.2.3 Entering the Cultural Relational (White English Therapists/Counsellors)

In response to the invitation to dialogue offered by the 'white' Irish client group, the white English therapists entered the intercultural space and engaged in a cultural conceptualization of the therapeutic work between a 'white' Irish client and a white English therapist. It emerged in the course of the analysis that the white English therapists had never consciously shone a light on the cultural relational in the conceptualization of their therapeutic work with 'white' Irish clients. However, as the analysis of the transcript revealed, this aspect of the relational was ever-present in the room, albeit at a more subconscious level.

Four sub-categories were identified in the analysis to describe the main relational processes employed by the white English therapists in the dialogue: Sharing Assumptions and Stereotypes, Disclosing the Intercultural Emotional World, Experiencing 'Missing', Managing the Intercultural Dialogic Space.

##### 4.2.3.1 Sharing Assumptions and Stereotypes

All members of the white English therapist group shared a number of stereotypes and assumptions, which were brought to the surface by the dialogue's focus on the cultural relational:

*Terry: "...if I had a client with an Irish name, I would have to manage the fact that when I was a child my family would have looked down on Irish people who came to work locally...they called them navvies who came to do seasonal work..."*

In addition to the Irish name, the Irish accent was asserted as a clear biological signifier of difference:

*Gary: "stereotypes seem to come to the surface quite quickly...I think accent...and it identifies for me an Irish person it is the kind of like a black person's skin identifies their culture and their race to me...I think an Irish accent does the same thing...just as skin colour won't change...the Irish accent seems to be enduring".*

*Matthew: "an Irish accent to me signals a history...I don't understand...the accent for me is body-based, infused with awareness, sense of culture"*

While the two main 'white' Irish stereotypes that became central in the dialogue were those of 'stupid' and 'dangerous', the 'dangerous' stereotype appears to have lost its potency due to shifting sociopolitical factors:

*Gary: "Irish are either stupid or you are dangerous (pause)...I feel that does represent a very strong stereotype" (and later, on reflection) "I don't know if it has diminished in itself, the kind of stupid or dangerous scenario, but I think in terms of pecking order... the Irish are probably, for the English, are still stupid but no longer as dangerous as Muslims".*

The Irish accent was also reported to conjure up images of Catholicism, together with a particular associated palette of emotions:

Caroline: *"The nuns at my boarding school, they were all Irish...They were the authority like teachers. They were our surrogate parents as well, a bit of anger towards them at times but that just came to mind as you just said that...that had been laying dormant. That could come into the room at some stage, Sister Mary-Ann or Sister Joseph".*

An outdated Catholicism appeared to be linked to Irishness in the conceptualization of therapy:

Caroline: *"...you do have history and culture...Could I understand the depth of your religion, the depth of your culture, the way you know your families are more united than ours? (Matthew agrees). If I was in a therapy room with you, all of these questions would be going through my head...because it is almost flaked away (in England)".*

Matthew: *"diluted".*

Caroline: *"here whereas I think yours is a country where it is very strong".*

Although stereotypes were described as coming to the "surface quite quickly" (Gary), the white English workshop-participants assured that they held the anti-stereotype in interaction with 'white' Irish clients:

Gary: *"it is my anti-stereotype...it is my opposition to the stereotype...that equally that could also be a block...to really hearing who is this person sitting in front of me".*

Reflecting on the impact of such a belief within the framework of the therapeutic encounter, I came to the conclusion that such an 'opposite' may have the same impact on the relationship as its counterpart. Such an anti-stereotype will always sit hand-in-hand with its opposite form. One cannot exist without the other.

#### 4.2.3.2 Disclosing the Intercultural Emotional World

My analysis of the dialogue transcript established a distinct emotional world, which the white English workshop-participants appeared to enter in interaction with 'white' Irish clients.

This emotional world contained a complex myriad of emotions, including guilt, shame and threat:

Matthew: *"I feel quite threatened because somebody has a history that I don't have...I am thinking when I have seen (Irish) clients with a certain rage...what I have experienced is a real internalized history".*

Caroline: *"perhaps it was shame about it (Famine). We could have done something, we should have done something".*

Gary: *"I share a kind of...guilt...on a political level at least, understanding the occupation of my culture of somebody else and I don't hold a self-blame for that, but I do get a kind of almost a collective regret, guilt, that rises up in me emotionally when I am in the presence, like tonight with people from an Irish culture".*

#### 4.2.3.3 Experiencing 'Missing'

In the course of the analysis, an experiencing of a cultural 'missing' was communicated repeatedly by the white English therapist group:

Terri: *"I am going to be missing probably loads of stuff...because I am focusing on one direction and I am aware of that as we are talking. I have been missing bits of me...and bits of the other...this is my growth curve I fear".*

Caroline: *"I sense an ignorance on my part, in the sense that you do have history and culture (that) I could not understand..."*.

Gary: *"...it is like a realization that in the therapy room, the Irish client and the English therapist both know something that is collective...what is on....those slides...is in my head somewhere...resonated somewhere...not something I say...not something I speak...not something I think very often about...perhaps there is a collective unspoken collusion..."*.

Differences in communication styles that 'white' Irish clients experienced as particularly important in interaction appeared out of awareness:

Brid: *"I am wondering is it, do you guys notice our use of English, the way we assign meaning or the way we just order words if those sort of things are visible to you?"*.

Caroline: *"probably not"*.

Matthew: *"no"*.

Terri: *"it is just that assumption because you share a language that you are sharing all the other reference points..."*.

A general lack of knowledge of the historical and political connectedness between the English and Irish cultures was also uncovered. The discourse was missing:

Caroline: *"it is your history...we have our history as well...and because we didn't learn your history...it is not connected in our heads...and I think...you end up sitting in a therapy session and for me...it is I don't understand it...I don't have that history...I don't the history that we have with you and you do...you understand yours"*

Caroline: *"I wonder why we don't talk about it?"*(Irish history).

Matthew: *"We don't"*.

In the course of dialoguing, the white English workshop-participants became aware of missing to date the 'lived cultural trauma' and associated emotions of the 'white' Irish group:

Matthew: *"...I find myself thinking ignorantly what was the Famine about?...if I was sitting with a client who may be feeling that shame and then to talk about it. I would not have a clue and...that there is far more darkness than (you are) willing to show...I was really shocked by that...that is a huge statement"*.

Gary: *"I am struck by this shame that you were talking about...the shame of the survivor and I wonder about the anger towards the oppressor..."*.

Matthew reflected on how his cultural 'missing' may be experienced by the "white' Irish client' as oppressive in the therapeutic space:

Matthew: *"when you were talking about oppression because it felt like for me thinking that door to oppression is still slightly ajar and actually not having an understanding of lapsed vs. ex (Catholic) vs. all of that. To what extent would I think of Catholicism as a bigger part of the frame than it actually is for the person...(Brid: "very interesting") and actually that for me creates the fear that I could so easily come across as oppressive..."*.

The white English therapist group concluded that it is not possible to conceptualize the cultural as something that is external to one's own being and the therapeutic interaction:

Gary: *"you know the imperialism, colonialism, oppression that I certainly hold in...my culture...I have become even more aware that there is an entrenchment for those feelings like I can't I don't think if that is part of English culture most of it is unconscious and therefore you can't escape from it".*

#### *4.2.3.4 Managing White Englishness in the Interpersonal Space*

A process of interaction adopted by white Englishness in interaction with 'white' Irishness emerged from the analysis. Although the white English participants answered the invitation to dialogue as white English therapists/counsellors, a need to reject aspects of this cultural self in the dialogue or reveal a 'minority identity' became evident:

Matthew: *"I find it difficult to say that I am an English therapist. That being an English therapist, I don't agree with that part".*

Gary: *"I am from very much a working-class background...equally my class that was punished, vilified downtrodden..."*.

Caroline: *"I have great-great-grandparents who came over here (from Ireland)..."*.

#### *4.2.4 Making Meaning in Dialogue*

The findings from my analysis of the transcript pointed to a process of meaning-making, which both groups engaged in actively at a new level of awareness. The workshop-participants combined knowledges to make sense of the 'missing' and suggest a possible way forward.

##### *-Reaching New Levels of Awareness*

Throughout the dialogue, the workshop-participants shared incidents of acquiring new awareness, experiencing a new sense of self and reaching a further emotional level:

Therese: *"...what I have been noticing tonight...is that also I am projecting...onto you the English therapist..."*.

Dermot: *"...something about integrating those two to make me...in having two cultures. How I translate that is now to begin honouring that in fact I have two cultures, English and Irish..."*.

Gary: *"I think my choking feeling and the feelings I have experienced tonight...because there is a part of me is wounded by being a member of a culture that oppresses"*.

##### *4.2.4.1 Making Sense of 'Missing'*

In making sense of an established 'missing' in the interpersonal space of therapy with 'white' Irish others, a number of the white English workshop-participants traced the reason back to educational and training structures while others looked to the historical relational:

Terri: *"I am aware that that my cultural frames of reference would be a long way back and I might make assumptions laden with meanings, but the frames of reference would I would use in the room would be to do my training...the trauma...that culture...is terribly background...what we are talking about tonight is more real but harder to talk about...it's...somehow the individual focus is part of that dynamic that keeps it on the fringe" (and later)... "the personal is the political and the political is the personal...I feel as if that is...that is this"*.

Gary: *"my take on it...I would imagine...that unconsciously...when an Irish person would come to me they would have that story in their psyche somewhere...even if it is not being articulated overtly...but I think what would block me...is that my understanding of the Famine...would place me...my Englishness as the perpetrator...the deliberate...decision-maker in abandoning Irish to their fate...the deliberate walking away to meet a political objective..."*

The white English participants acknowledged their growing awareness of the need to own the to-date 'missing' cultural self in the therapy room:

Matthew: *"...that being an English therapist...I don't agree with that part...but it is valuable is holding that...like you said Terry...that holding...shining the light in is not including the cultural thing...but it is bigger"*

#### *4.2.4.2. Co-Constructing an Intercultural Conceptual Framework: Voicing, Owning and Healing?*

In the second half of the dialogue, the analysis identified a co-constructed framework for understanding the intercultural dynamic at play in the interpersonal space that incorporated concepts from the trauma literature and transactional analysis school:

Ailish: *"I am very intrigued by that, the 'easy to oppress', when you (Matthew) were thinking about your feelings about words. What came to mind for me was the...I had a real sense of the Irish-English relationship as being similar to a very enmeshed codependent relationship where the abuse has happened but there is still the dependency there and because of that, there has not been the clarity of other nations who have been able to say, this is our experience, this is what has happened between. There is that whole I feel confusion because there is a codependency"...(and)... "it is not talked about because it is shameful...and there is a mutual benefit to not talking about it and that is what has been going through my mind".*

Gary: *"you know that TA model of the controlling parent and the adapted child. Neither can become the adult. The different roles can't move to the I-Thou position. There is a complementary (pause). It could work even though dysfunction. It works on that level but it traps both parties. Both parties can't move forward towards a more adult relationship".*

There was also a recognition that the dialogue was a beginning and offered the group a possible way forward based on the experience of interacting that evening. This involved taking responsibility and developing a discourse in which the relationship could find words:

Ailish: *"it felt like a door was opened and something about being heard...and acknowledged...not just one group of people talking about things, but it is about sharing those thoughts...it feels for me like there is something healing in this space".*

Gary: *"until collectively English culture can take responsibility for our past and our present actually...instead of repeating the past...a healing can take place"(and later) "perhaps also through the trauma that you also spoke about tonight...maybe it's the trauma...the unrelenting trauma that has not been able to be moved on...maybe because it has not been able to be spoken...you know...named...leaves that sense of identification with the oppressor rather than the anger towards the oppressor".*



### 4.3 Reflections on Personal Process During Data Collection/Analysis Phase

From the initial stages I had, as mentioned in my previous personal pieces, become aware of a myriad of emotions welling up in me in connection with the piece. I came to see this emotional bundle as baggage upon which I had to keep an eye as I made my way on what sometimes felt like a journey through treacherous terrain. This baggage became too heavy at times. I could hardly bear it. I often had to stop and unpack it, both alone and with others on the way. Some things I could process on the way, but others still occupy my mind and affective world. The journey is not yet over. I hope these personal pieces provide the reader with a lens through which to feel into my process as I moved through the piece. Perhaps it will add a lens to those already adopted.

In the initial stages of the cooperative inquiry, I found myself caught between a desire to be open about my own process and a fear that my process could overpower the group dynamic and destroy it. I did not want to appear 'too much' or 'over-emotional'. Even as I sit writing this personal piece, there is part of me that feels a desire to keep these personal pieces to myself. Maybe the reader will find them 'too much'? In my childhood, I had learned that any show of negative emotion vis-à-vis Ireland's history with England was unwanted. I had indeed been warned by Irish family members, by friends and colleagues that I should let things lie. Uncertainty has thus often seized me during these last few years. Do I need to be apologetic for entering these forbidden intercultural shadowlands? Should I be grateful that the intrusion is being tolerated and I am still standing? What will the next steps bring? Danger? How dark are these shadowlands? But then I asked myself to whom should I be apologetic and grateful or of whom am I afraid? Many relational rules from lives past haunted me throughout this research journey.

On reflecting on how I could be transparent about my process without my voice drowning out those of my participants, it became clear for me it would in fact be unethical and unhealthy to withhold my personal motives, interests and emotional journey from the group. Perhaps my own fear of being 'too much' was in fact the reason behind my apparent concern for the other participants' voice. Maybe my sense of concern was merely an avoidance tactic. Thus, at the outset, I briefly outlined to the group the experiential trail that had led me to the group. This disclosure unleashed a volcanic flow of phenomenological consciousness from within our collective space as others began to recount and relive their own experiences. I believe from this moment on, the inquiry took a life of its own which is still pulsing as I write. My voice is now just one of many others.

Having made the initial introduction and disclosure, I found myself trying to then pull back and sit on the sideline to get a grasp of what was emerging while simultaneously endeavouring to keep emotionally and bodily engaged with the moment-to-moment process. I was aware that I had

already begun processing these emotions with colleagues and friends many years previously. I had read a vast amount and held many theories in my head. I was constantly torn between a deep desire to let myself fall and go along with the group without plan and a rational piece of me that needed to sit with what the group was bringing. In retrospect, I realize that I was sometimes so caught up in this dilemma in my own head that I missed pieces of the dialogue in the initial group. It was only on listening to the tape recording afterwards that I actually 'heard' the words and felt the affective and bodily reaction that I had missed in the not 'listening'. This awareness supported me greatly as I entered the ensuing stages of inquiry.

Another of my most challenging dilemmas throughout the inquiry and dialogue related to how to actually use my felt senses in the moment-to-moment movement of the dialogue. I had expected this to be easier due to my experience of working relationally with my clients. However, this cooperative inquiry space felt so dense with sensory inputs that I often felt myself springing instantaneously from emotion to emotion and from image to image. Sometimes I felt my contributions had more of an elephant-in-a china-shop nature, particularly at first when I thought too hard and long about making them. At other times, they interwove naturally in the flow, i.e. when I succeeded in letting myself relax into the emotional chaos without losing the ability to reflect *a little*. This tension remained throughout. I was ever thankful that I had the tapes, which allowed me to re-immense myself in the process as I worked myself through the analysis slowly, line-by-line. The grounded theory design and cooperative inquiry format allowed me to rectify my oversights. The important themes, I may have missed in the moment, emerged in the analysis and could be integrated into the following session.

Two of the more difficult emotional pieces with which I struggled at differing stages were my felt senses of 'heaviness' and 'anger'.

### **Heaviness?**

A felt sense of heaviness, which was totally unexpected in its force and depth, contributed to the mood of the research process from the initial stages. I became aware of its existence when I started to reflect on the psychological legacies of colonisation and Famine and engaged with the literature on transgenerational trauma. It was an old heaviness, full of sadness and loss, loneliness and silence. From the outset, I had a sense that I was carrying past generations of Irish in both Ireland and England as well as what felt like a whole missed present-day generation of Irish people living in intercultural shadows within the English society. Its mass intensified within the cooperative inquiry, especially as we started to dare to speak of the past but became lighter in that voicing. This growing sense I believe is caught in the excerpt below:

*"It is a lurking presence in process, as if everything has just been condensed into or deposited into a space apart from but always hovering over or under us and perhaps often taking us over? It feels like a legacy...trauma...a trauma that just cannot be talked about in England...as Joanne in S1 describes... 'we don't talk about the Famine here...we just don't talk about it.' There was a heavy feeling as we spoke about the Famine 'here'...we pulled the words out...felt the trauma weighing on the group...I often felt so close to tears at these points...and hopelessness, despair. The heaviness of the words and the effort it appeared to take us to articulate them reflected this atmosphere. Tim (S1) spoke quietly of his brothers 'digging' into how his family survived the Famine '...there is a lot of stuff', he concluded, his gaze towards the floor. His use of the word 'digging' opens up another image for me as I write this...the digging of graves, and I am again overcome with sadness...lying so heavy on my shoulders and chest. Even as I write my arms feel like lead..."*

*(Reflective Memo, December 3<sup>rd</sup>, 2012)*

This 'heaviness' unnerved me greatly. When I read Patrick Kavanagh's poem below, I experienced a similar and familial embodied sense of heaviness. It contained hopeless, stagnancy, lustlessness and resignation:

*Silence, silence. The story is done.  
He stands in the doorway of his house  
A ragged sculpture of the wind,  
October creaks the rotted mattress,  
The bedposts fall, No hope. No lust.  
The hungry fiend  
Screams the apocalypse of clay  
In every corner of Ireland*

- Kavanagh, 'The Great Hunger' (1942)

I was aware that very difficult things were coming up for me and was concerned that I may be asking too much of my participants. I felt it was leading to a 'stuckness' in the movement, to a frozen state and, worst of all, to a passivity. It was the passivity, my passivity too, which deeply frustrated me on listening to the tapes. I spoke about it in supervision and reflected on it in therapy. What is it? What will I do with this? How can I get rid of it? I found myself focusing away from it at the beginning. It became clear with time and reflection that I was avoiding the accompanying pain, mainly due to my own fear of it and an urgent need to move on. It was, however, blocking the

analytic flow as I discovered in my written reflecting following the initial session. I was walking through the English Garden in Munich on a winter's morning:

*'I walked through a snow-bound frozen landscape today....rigid...unrelenting...impermeable...but waiting?.... It mirrors my process at the moment...I feel my thought structures are rigid...inflexible... My head aches sometimes as I try to sort through the data. I am waiting for spring but this has been a long...long...winter. I am still waiting for the light and the air to breathe. This research process is heavy and often full of silence. What is below the ice?'*

*(Reflective Memo, December 8<sup>th</sup>, 2012)*

It took me a while to identify the parallel process inherent in the dynamic. In Ireland, the message communicated by both our politicians and historians was: *'It's in the past...move on!'* It took time, but eventually I started engaging with it and letting it in. When I let myself sit with it in the process, a quiet reflective space seemed to form. This is reflected in Therese's sharing of her poignant transgenerational memory of the Famine recounted in section 4.1.1.1 (p. 71). Thereafter, I had a dream on which I reflect in the excerpt below:

*'The image (Therese's) has remained with me for days...last night I dreamt I was looking out on the road in front of my own family home as starving people passed by in droves...heads hanging in despair...I was frozen...unable to move...to speak to do anything...totally in shock. I looked down at an emaciated body and tried to rise up. I cried out in my dream and woke up shivering...This image and its pain I know. It is old'*

*(Reflective Memo, December 20<sup>th</sup>, 2012)*

Once I let it in and accepted the pain, this heaviness became lighter as other members of the group took on parts of it and we processed it to some extent. We spoke about senses of loss and sadness therein and the sense of hopelessness this brought with it. We realized that it had always been sitting with us but as an unacknowledged piece of our cultural being. We made progress, but I believe such transgenerational heaviness is not something that can be processed in a matter of months. This processing still continues.

## **ANGER!**

I have written about the anger I experienced during the run-up to the actual inquiry. It had given me the energy to take the first steps on this road. However, from the beginning of the cooperative inquiry, I noted that an expression of direct anger towards our English Other never appeared desirable or perhaps necessary within the Irish group. Perhaps, I thought initially, we had other

themes emerging from reflection on that colonial legacy which needed processing. We appeared to be sitting with, and often stuck within, the shame, loss and sorrow the historical relational past had left behind. However, I began with time to recognize the hints of anger being caught in the non-verbal markers, which I speak of in section 4.1.2.2 (p. 80). I wondered, in retrospect, whether we may all be keeping to the rule identified by Dermot and Bríd ‘*Don’t show your rage*’? Perhaps we were reluctant to risk it getting out of control in our space? I wanted to believe that it would emerge if present? Maybe we were all avoiding its unpleasantness of being the first to voice it? In the first two sessions and up to the last part of the third session, Ailish was the only participant who acknowledged the impact anger had had on her relationships, namely the therapeutic relationship. She added, however, that she had worked through it, suggesting she did not carry it in the experiential here-and-now of the process. Bríd mentioned a rage that she still harboured for her previous therapist but qualified this statement with a comment that it may not have had anything to do with the therapist’s Englishness. She still carried the rage she realized as the process continued but denied its association with the themes at hand until later in the new context of the dialogue. It was only during the dialogue that she realized that the anger belonged to the intercultural relational. The anger that was palpable in the cooperative inquiry was that expressed in relation to injustices perceived against other groups within England. Tom openly expressed his anger with the English government due to its job cut measures in the public services, which he witnessed had serious consequences for the ‘casualties’ of a system that is ‘terribly ill’:

*“I feel very cross...with them...I worked in the voluntary sector over here for a few years...and I work with a few managers of voluntary sector agencies and I just feel cross at the way, the division, with the economic thing. The division in the country has been solidified and hardened...and there is a sense of injustice about that I am really against on the inside...I am very pissed off with the present government at the moment”.*

Gerry swiftly shared his own ‘*anger with the current government*’. He had made a stand by leaving a profession due to the bureaucracy and paperwork that the institutional structures necessitated. I also felt such an anger when Bríd spoke about her working-class clients’ rage against the system or discrimination based on accent faced by English in the North of England. Ailish’s anger was heard in her fight for disadvantaged patients she perceived as being oppressed by the system. Anger was evident but seemed to be, I noted on review, displaced into other safer avenues. Perhaps we believed anger was allowed, safe or would not attract retaliation if expressed in support of other oppressed groups but never in response to our own perceived oppression. This rule I had myself, I realized, internalized during my own childhood.

The heaviness I had struggled with throughout the inquiry appeared to move deep into the background at the end of the third session when the prospective dialogue with English

therapists/counsellors became figural. The energy suddenly seemed to shift and become more electric and alive in our group's dialogic space. It was as if the heaviness was something within the group, something old, internal and deadening.

This new energy was more intergroup and definitely had the feel of defensive function. It was also lighter and lively, full of expectation. Its tone was reassured, confident and challenging and had pride. "*It's not about pleasing (the English)*", Ailish declared adamantly at this point. "*we have something important to say*". Therese's eyes glistened and her voice quivered with a hint of anger as she issued her challenge "*they'd be brave if they said we were stupid!*" Our gaze was no longer fixed on the internal dynamics of the group but was instead directed at the English therapist/counsellor group. I couldn't get a clear handle on the emotion behind the energy initially. I think I was still stuck in the heaviness.

Later, on reading through earlier memos, I became aware that this new energy resembled that which had motivated me in the early stages of the research. I had realized, on reflection, that my anger and frustration vis-à-vis the colonial past and present inequality perceived in the mental health system had spurred me on towards a challenging of this status quo. This energy had activated me into a form of resistance. It had been my way of dealing with the inevitable sadness and loss. Was this what was happening in the group too? As I sat in the group at the end of that third session, however, I was also aware of an underlying sense of caution, wariness and hesitancy to this collective anger. This was caught in Bríd's warning of the need to protect 'ourselves' by keeping this angry darkness amongst our own. I wondered if we would risk voicing the important pieces as Ailish had called for or if we would really attack if we were called 'stupid' as Therese had hinted at.

It remained with me in the time prior to the dialogue that this energy-laden final note of anger may have been indicative of a calling on an internal resource in the run up to a challenge. In my own process, I was still struggling with a way of voicing my own anger without fear of retaliation. I didn't feel the need to voice it 'amongst my own' but in the intercultural interaction. But was I up for the challenge? It appeared I was caught in a process paralleling that of the collective? At the end of that last session prior to the dialogue, I felt regret and deep concern that we did not have another session before the dialogue in which we could process what was emerging in those last few minutes. The time was not there, and I had to flow with what was happening. I reflected thereafter that the source of my regret and concern may have been that old fear of retaliation. I may have wanted to assure myself perhaps that this anger would indeed be kept under wraps and out of the dialogic space with the English therapists and counsellors.

From the earliest stages of the dialogue, the English therapists/counsellors contributed eagerly and showed great openness in sharing the Irish stereotypes which “*seem(ed) to come to the surface quite quickly*” (Gary) for them. Within the first 30 minutes, images of the Irish as ‘navvies’, ‘dangerous’, ‘stupid’, ‘anger-provoking’ and ‘threatening’ were floating in the room. The English attendees were indeed brave enough to call the Irish ‘stupid’. I was myself taken aback at how easily these stereotypes slipped over their lips. Although our counterparts were adamant in their distancing of themselves from these stereotypes, the words had been said and sat there. During this period, I noticed that the Irish group remained relatively silent in response. There was no verbal reaction of any kind to the actual disclosure for a long period of time. There were other pieces offered by the Irish group. Therese made a funny comment as Caroline shared her memories of her encounters with Irish Catholic nuns as if to lighten the mood. Gerry introduced the theme of absence of Irishness in the media, a theme that Bríd also verbally reflected on. It was an important theme but it felt out of place at a deeper level when I felt into the emotional flow.

For my part, I noticed during this period how my ‘researcher’ role seemed to take hold of me as I seemed to run on automatic and continued to ask general questions with the aim of attaining a richer description of the English attendees’ disclosures. I was, however, processing other thoughts at another level. I was asking myself: Where are we? Where is the Irish voice? I didn’t want to force it by mentioning it. That, I felt, was not up to me, but in retrospect I feel I may have been afraid of the intensity of the reaction if I did mention it. All the while, I was conscious that at some removed level I seemed to be waiting and carefully observing the English. Perhaps that was what we were all doing, I thought. The English voice seemed to have already taken the floor, dictated the themes and taken charge. When I listened to tapes at a later stage, I was struck by how much the core processes identified in the cooperative inquiry were paralleled in this process. We had so much we had wanted to say, but we also feared that voicing? Were we used to the English voice taking over, defining us and explaining our behaviour? We were careful to pay close attention to these English counterparts. Were we assessing how we were expected to react at a deeper level?, I wondered. Dermot had pointed out already, in the first session, that he had always had a sense that he had to pay close attention to the English. I wondered if that was a form of evaluating the risk of attack. He had added that the “*English don't have to take any notice of us*”. They thus don't have to evaluate such a risk perhaps. Gary, one of the English attendees, did indeed comment that he felt “*the Irish are probably for the English still stupid but no longer...dangerous*”. I wondered was there a sense that, because of this, they did not have to fear retaliation in the dialogue. They could disclose their feelings without any fear of retaliation? The Irish did not seem to be so sure.

In speaking about the Six Nations Rugby Championship, Bríd disclosed at a later stage of the dialogue that she had often experienced the English being open about their desire to annihilate the

Irish team *"if there is the smell of blood on the Irish side"*. I felt that perhaps this unthought process was reflected in the dialogue. The Irish group had entered the dialogue in an act of resistance and challenge. That was evidenced in the mood of the final section of the previous session. They were, however, very quickly silenced. The stereotypes we assumed were held by our English counterparts in our everyday interactions were confirmed as indeed being held very close to the surface. They were already weighing on us and inviting us to enter their connected emotional mood. Bríd added that *"maybe we (Irish) do (wish to annihilate the English) as well and we don't say it"*. This appeared to be a description of the space we inhabited at that moment, too. We were not voicing our real feelings of anger?

Although wordless, the Irish presence was not emotionless in response. My countertransference reactions were loud but felt encaged within my skin. As I listened, I felt a well of anger growing in the silent space. I became aware of its force, however, only when Dermot, who was the first to respond to the voicing of the stereotypes, offered that he felt that *"to hear you say that as an English person really touches me...and than-you for saying that..."*. I did not share that gratitude. In fact, I found myself sensing an anger and shame deep within at Dermot's words. I struggled with these emotions. I was also angered and shamed by the stereotypical images presented, spoken, hooking into me as I sat there. I had read so much about the colonial strategy of stupefying the colonized by cutting off access to education. I was angry that their tactic had worked and their construct survives. But were these feelings just mine or did they belong to the group? Was Dermot responding as he had been taught in the past?, I wondered. He had disclosed during the inquiry that he had internalized the rule, *"Don't expose yourself"* from his mother and qualified that this meant *"You mustn't stand out...I had to fit into something"*. Dermot's gratitude was in answer perhaps to some unconscious expectation in the room? There could have been a process of reaction formation at play. Instead of expressing anger at the disclosures, is it better perhaps to communicate gratitude for attention of any kind? We had, as a nation, learned that we needed to show gratitude for any soup and the shelter provided during and after the Famine. We didn't have the energy to retaliate. We had already been defeated and needed to be grateful that we had been allowed to survive, perhaps. In a similar manner, I reflected, we had ventured to express some displeasure at how the Irish had been treated by the English historically and perhaps were grateful that we had not been annihilated. In the dialogue, this dynamic seemed to be accompanied by another form of avoidance on the part of the Irish group, that of making a joke at junctures where the dialogue appeared to be getting difficult (see section 4.2.2.2 on p.94). At these times, I also found myself getting angry and frustrated with our Irish selves. Why could we not allow the darkness to emerge and deal with it in the verbal domain? I was also angry with myself. I was also silent.



However, I noted as I listened more carefully that the anger was not totally avoided. I heard it on a number of occasions in a more indirect form. I had felt it in my countertransferential reaction to Dermot's gratitude. It came through in Bríd's comment that the Irish may wish to annihilate the English but do not necessarily show it. I could hear it loud and clear in Therese's tone in her response to Gary's comment that unlike the English, the Irish culture "*could be easily articulated in couple of minutes*" by the Irish. Therese was clear that there "*are more raw emotions...than you can talk about*" in such an articulation, "*anger, shame and guilt*". She disclosed, however, that she prefers to keep "*the dangerous stuff...very much inside*" although she concedes that "*everything is so complicated. Like the shadows, there are so many of them. There is anger about these things happening and there is also shame...and guilt*". It was, once again, as if the 'shame and guilt' could be openly expressed. These emotions throbbed throughout the Irish attendees' verbal contribution. The anger reverberated at a deeper, unspoken bodily level. Perhaps it was not possible to sit with the verbalised anger in the space or still too early to let the anger show. Gary's comment had also hit a nerve within my own being, but I had not spoken of it. It did not allow myself to do so. I was not ready to process it in the dialogic space.

I was very aware that I was not verbalizing these countertransferential reactions in the space. One of the things that kept coming to my mind was the caution and fear that had been discussed by the Irish prior to the dialogue. However, at another level, I felt my withholding may have been grounded in my own fear of being shamed by my revealing any uncomfortable emotion in the space. I may appear 'too much'. It may not be understood? Additionally, at yet another level, I was conscious of my fear of destroying the delicate interaction in this voicing. Would I destroy what was coming together? But maybe I was holding these feelings for the group? Was it my place as the initiator to voice this?

It was evident that anger was emerging in me but also a fear of this anger's expression. This, I sensed, did not just belong to me but was bigger. I was, however, uncertain of the effect that confronting the group with my own sense of anger might have on the dynamic. What would it unleash?, I asked myself. I wanted it to find a spontaneous way in and not by my researcher self perhaps forcing it on the group, I thought. It did not feel right. I felt also deep down more time was needed to build a stronger alliance between these groups. I believe this was reflected in Dermot's final comment "*I was in Birmingham the night the bomb went off and in Brighton the night the bomb went off there but I have never been in a group where English and Irish people have spoken ever in my life and I feel encouraged by that...*". There was a sense in his words that such a dialogue itself has the potential to be explosive and dangerous. This actual coming together was at that moment enough as an initial step. It felt unethical to drop the bomb with only that evening to assess and process the damage. I still sit with the fact that my own fear of the devastation of such a 'bombing'

of negative emotions on the process may at one level have hindered what could have been a richer encounter. My intuitive sense, perhaps developed over generations, had signalled that the time was not yet ripe. We hid it well, I learned towards the end of the dialogue session. One of the English attendees pensively commented on reflection on the evening's meeting: *"I am struck by this shame that you were talking about and I wonder about the anger towards the oppressor. I haven't heard much of that or seen much of that..."*. Perhaps unaware of the anger living just below the surface or maybe sensing it, he warned *"not being able to express anger cleanly, openly turns into self-loathing"*. The Irish attendees continued to remain silent about the existence of any such emotion in the room that night. I could feel in me the anger shifting into a self-loathing. Am I too weak, too incompetent, too immature? I was angry with myself. I suddenly found myself within the skin of the Irish client and asked myself how much negative emotion remains unacknowledged and unprocessed in work with English therapists and counsellors.

The unvoiced anger and frustration became the stuff of our review, as can be seen in the next session. Once again 'amongst our own' the anger I sensed vibrating in the dialogic space could be safely voiced along with the self-loathing its continued silencing had given rise to thereafter.

#### 4.4 The Review

During the review, the 'white' Irish inquiry-participants reflected on the process as a whole and on the dialoguing specifically. A myriad of emotions emerged in reflection. Most of the time was used to process the dialogue, which was experienced by all involved as an unprecedented event:

Dermot: *"I felt it was a very unique experience actually, the last session. That has never happened before...it is honouring. It is no use having a home, a sort of place if you have not acknowledged your ancestors almost in the ground".*

However there was a deep sense that an unspoken rule had also been broken:

Therese: *"...I was surprised how uncomfortable and different it felt...like a taboo to talk about these things, the English-Irish thing..."*

Many inquiry-participants disclosed their discomfort in the interaction. A number of inquiry-participants regretted silencing feelings of anger. The consequences in terms of power relations of a felt need to protect the white English group from the intercultural emotional world was explored:

Bríd: *"...we gave the English an easy time. I thought we were very gentle with them. We minded them. We looked after them instead of saying 800 years and stuff like that. Speaking personally, I felt very interested to realize that I was quite angry by the end of the time, of the group time. I mean I was exercised a bit and when I thought about it next day I thought 'fuck it'. There was something about I was not honest. I would have expected that actually. Somebody said before it that is was like bringing visitors into your kitchen, that we kind of scrub off and behave and there was an element of that about and I felt there was a darkness in me around this as well. I think they were a bit freaked out. They did not know what to expect. Once they realized that we were not going to give them a hard time, they kind of took over I felt..."*

The dialogue impacted on the inquiry-participants greatly. One inquiry-participant described a type of 'dissociation' from her day-to-day life thereafter. She recalled an intrusive dream, which she understood as an unveiling of previously repressed unconscious dynamics.

Ailish: *"it (process) has taken me into an ancestral place, very much and after the last time we met. Yes there were anxieties....discomfort, awkwardness. There were strangers coming I did not know well...I was expecting anger and I was expecting more tension or had an expectation that there would be more tussles, and perhaps it was about giving them a nice time and not really expressing anger and at the same time what I felt for days after I was in a very different place emotionally, almost like I was floating. I was still doing all my work, but I was in a very deep place and I had a very powerful dream shortly afterwards and that dream was about me being abused...it was not physical but psychological. But I woke up from this dream and I never remember dreams and I was an agitated child...because I felt I was to blame for the perceived abuse. I knew what it was about. I am Ireland and that for me was such a powerful experience and I knew I didn't have to write it down. For me it was how do I describe it...very sad, very painful but at the same time it was wonderful...I felt I was absolutely connecting with a history and a past that I had not been letting to the surface".*

In reflecting on the dialogue transcript, a number of the inquiry-participants became aware of subtle implicit processes at work beyond the spoken words:

Bríd: *"...one of the lads spoke about shame around the colonial past and you would always be saying, well you didn't do it, don't worry about it, but there is also an ulterior, an unspoken not*

*even conscious sense that there is pride in that as well pride in the colonial past and you know I suppose... So there is a pride...but the shame?..."*

*The overall process:* All inquiry-participants spoke of connecting with a previously hidden internal intergenerational dynamic in the course of the process. The intercultural relational was constructed as previously out of consciousness for both 'white' Irish clients and white English therapists. Only during the process did an awareness of the impact of the cultural relational dimension emerge. There was a general consensus that this relational dimension needs to be voiced in therapy:

Gerry: *"What can be missed (in therapy) and not acknowledged, and then people are missing each other as well or interacting in an unhelpful way...the intergenerational trauma where that sits in me"*.

Tom: *"....there is a whole unconscious element sitting in the relationship between the two countries...the codependency...I really do think that that is what is hidden. It was also hidden from my own eyes as an Irish person how it influences in terms of the shame we talked about a lot...it does need to be articulate"*.

A theme that accompanied our review process, as it did the inquiry and dialogue processes, was that of transgenerational trauma. All inquiry-participants constructed the intercultural relational space as one resulting from historical trauma. The inquiry-participants referred to the trauma literature in describing our group process and concluded:

Brid: *"I really feel so fortunate that I had this place to come to and I am thinking about that as well. I know that the trauma has been the focus of what we have been doing, and I feel the grieving was too. I really feel I have grieved for things I cannot repeat or put names on for ancestors, clients maybe Dad, decent people affected by this stuff"*.

## 5 Discussion

### 5.1 Introduction

A central element of psychotherapy is the therapeutic relationship (Gelso et al., 1998; Norcross et al., 2002). This relationship is multidimensional, multifaceted, co-created and ever-shifting (Clarkson, 2003; Payrhuber, 2011; Orange, 1995). Multiculturalists and transculturalists stress that the cultural constitutes one such relational dimension (Carter, 1995; Comas-Diaz et al., 1991; Sue et al., 1987). This study may be one of the first to conduct a qualitative inquiry into 'white' Irish clients' experiencing and understanding of the intercultural dimension of their relationship with white English therapists. The central research question in the study was:

**How, in an English context, is the therapeutic work between a 'white' Irish client and a white English therapist/counsellor conceptualized or understood?**

During the course of the inquiry, experiences of being-in-relationship with white English therapists/counsellors were recounted and reflected upon against the background of its cultural origins and broader contexts. The findings from this study were found to provide white English therapists/counsellors with a new, revised understanding of the therapeutic relationship. The data from this study generated a model that may prove useful in conceptualizing the experiences of clients from a variety of cultural backgrounds.

Using grounded theory methods, I identified three main categories emerging from the data collected during a cooperative inquiry with a group of first- and second-generation Irish inquiry-participants who had experiences of therapy in England:

- **Category 1: The Irish-English Historical Relational**
- **Category 2: The Irish-English Relational in an English context**
- **Category 3: The Irish-English Therapeutic Relational**

The inquiry group conceptualized the intercultural dimension of a therapeutic relationship with white English therapists to originate in the colonial relationship. The effect of the English colonization of Ireland and most particularly its associated racialization processes, together with the tragedy of the Great Famine during this period, were located within a relational trauma framework. The Great Famine, in a sense, acted not only as a legacy but also as a metaphor. The colonial relationship was viewed as impacting on the intercultural dimension of all consequent relational contexts: institutional, societal, interpersonal and intrapsychic. This influence is believed to continue into the present-day therapy room. Furthermore a higher-order concept was identified from the data: 'Living the Historical Relational in the Present'. This process was marked by an

internal tension between the 'white' Irish client's desire to be seen as a separate cultural entity and their fear of the trauma of being seen as such by their white English counterpart. This concept ran across and linked the categories previously identified.

Following the analysis of the data arising from this cooperative inquiry, a dialogue took place between the 'white' Irish client group and a group of white English therapists/counsellors. Two main categories arose from the analysis:

- **Category 1: Breaking the Silence ('white Irish clients')**
- **Category 2: Entering the Cultural Relational ('white English therapists/counsellors')**

Both groups struggled throughout the dialogue process to make sense of their experiences within this space. In doing so, the group members called on their personal experiences and theoretical knowledges. It emerged that the discourse had not yet been developed in which the processes could be contained and given meaning. This was understood as arising from the widely accepted tendency to define 'ethnic/racial difference' in terms of skin colour. The dialogue appeared to serve both groups in processing to a certain extent the intercultural relational.

These findings suggest a vast gap in psychology research, literature and practice regarding questions of race and ethnicity. They point to an urgent need to rework the current multicultural discourse used in the area by looking beneath the construct of 'race' as a 'black/white' divide to the contexts and philosophies of the racialization process from which such constructs emerged. The necessity for white English psychotherapists/counsellors to give intercultural or more specifically interracial/interethnic issues attention in conceptualizing and processing their work with 'white' Irish clients is particularly highlighted.

## **5.2 A Postcolonial Conceptualization**

A significant research finding is the connection established between the past colonial relationship, the present intergroup relationship and the therapeutic relationship between a 'white' Irish client and a white English therapist. This intergenerationally transmitted relationship manifests itself in the 'white' Irish client's affective relational experiencing and their tendency to actively and automatically monitor and manage their intercultural relationship with perceived white English therapists.

A colonial relational conflict is indicated in the clients' sense of living unintegrated conflicting dual identities, particularly in the case of the second generation. Additionally, inquiry-participants discussed experiencing a complex web of emotions in the intercultural space, but feelings of shame,

inferiority, anger, fear and loss vis-à-vis their own cultural selves in relationship were particularly foregrounded. The intercultural affective world and processes mirrored dynamics indicative of transgenerational relational trauma (Coll et al., 2012; Payrhuber, 2011; Lloyd, 2000; Moane, 2006; Kenny, 1985).

### *5.2.1 Postcolonial Emotional Experiencing*

The 'white' Irish clients' subjective experience of this colonial relational was communicated particularly in an internal 'shift', which the inquiry-participants at times experienced when their Irish cultural selves became foregrounded in the presence of the white English therapist. They shifted internally into an affective position of inferiority and shame when focus was placed on the intercultural relational. These emotions were associated with cultural signifiers such as language, accent, name and Catholicism but also with an internalized belief that the Irish intellect was inferior to that of the English counterpart<sup>30</sup>. These findings are consistent with theories developed by Kenny (1985), Young-Bruehl (1996) and Memmi (1965). The cultural invasion during the process of colonization, the aim of which was a 'colonization of the mind' (Said, 2003:179), has left its mark.

Racialized constructs of inherent cultural inferiority are seen to emerge generations later in the intercultural space leading to a sense of shame when in the company of the once-colonizer (Fanon, 1967; Greenslade, 1992). The act of joke-telling, in particular, appears to trigger these emotions. The 'white' Irish clients assumed two strong stereotypes were still held by their white English counterparts in the intercultural present: the acceptable 'clown'/'stupid'/'uncivilized' stereotype and an inadmissible 'terrorist'/'threatening' stereotype. Although the 'terrorist' stereotype was asserted to have lost its edge following the Good Friday Peace Agreement, the stereotype of the Irish as 'stupid' or 'funny' remains. Constructed to justify colonization and devalue the native cultural self, this stereotype appears to have been reworked into widely accepted joke forms (Curtis, 1984; Hickman, 1995). The representations maintain the original function of triggering 'shame' and establishing colonial power relations in interaction (O'Connor, 2013).

A sense of rage also accompanied the 'white' Irish clients into the intercultural space but, whereas shame and inferiority emerged fluidly in our inquiry as if it lived just below the surface, anger vis-à-vis the English Other initially proved difficult to verbalize. The collective rage was described as dangerous, overpowering and destructive in the intercultural space. It is linked to the sense of shame and inferiority but appears to hide behind them (O'Connor, 2013). It was presented as a force living unvoiced also in the therapy space. It was palpable in the collective energy of the 'white'

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<sup>30</sup> It is important to mention that this experiential shift was identified in interaction with middle-class white English Others. 'Working-class' English proved to be an identity with which the 'white' Irish clients identified due to a perceived shared 'oppression'. Interestingly, one of the criticisms of the counselling/therapy profession is the fact that it remains a bastion of the middle classes (Feltham, 2005; Sue, 2003).

Irish group, both in the inquiry and dialogue but particularly in the dialogue the emotion appeared to freeze behind a wall of silence (Payrhuber, 2012). Only in the review, when the 'white' Irish group reassembled to reflect on the dialogue, was rage voiced. It appeared to be safer to express the darker affective side of the cultural self 'amongst our own'. Such repressed anger and rage was also identified in theories developed by Moane (2006), Kenny (1985) and Greenslade (1992). Its repression facilitated the avoidance of appearing threatening, which has been proven historically to lead to confrontation and possible retaliation from the potential abusive persecutor. This fear accompanied the inquiry-participants into the present intercultural space with the white English Other (Greenslade 1992; Payrhuber, 2011).

Fear of showing this anger and inviting retaliation was also accompanied by a fear of being shamed and disempowered. Once the colonizer's construct of the 'white' Irish cultural self had been internalized collectively during the colonial period, it also became the source of shame (Fanon, 1967; Kenny 1985; Lloyd, 2000; O'Connor, 2013). The 'white' Irish clients harboured the fear that in any interaction with the white English Other, feelings of shame and, with it, disempowerment could be triggered. There was always the risk that the 'white' Irish self could be laughed at in the intercultural space. Fear of being exposed was thus accompanied by a distrust of the white English Other, who perhaps unwittingly still maintains a colonizing control over the intercultural or interracial/interethnic power dynamics (Thomas, 2013).

A sense of deep and tragic transgenerational loss accompanied the inquiry process. This emotion had been identified by a number of Irish theorists, e.g. Moane (2006). I experienced it as an unexpected saddening weight that often deadened the atmosphere. It was a shared bonding and deeply known loss that appeared to emerge in reflection on our collective past of colonization, famine, death, emigration and cultural destruction. It had a visceral presence in the room, which defied precise naming, but I often felt a sense of hopelessness in its presence. I believe, however, that allowing it to exist in the space, as we did, seemed to facilitate a collective mourning process, which I experienced as running parallel to the inquiry. At times it found its way into our dialogue, but at other times it sat with us behind the words.

This transgenerational loss was accompanied by a loss experienced by the 'white' Irish inquiry-participants in a felt 'absent presence' of Irishness at all relational levels in Irish-English interacting, including therapy. The Great Famine emerged as a painful legacy but also acts as a metaphor for the hunger for recognition that the Irish client group appeared to experience in relationship with English Others in the English context. The transgenerational intercultural was left unaddressed, absent in their interactions with the white English therapist/counsellor, but was ever-present for the 'white' Irish client as the 'elephant in the therapy room'. This 'absent presence' of the race/ethnicity relational dimension has already been identified by the Quereshi (2007) in his study



on the therapy work between an African-American client and a European-American therapist. In retrospect, he reflected how the felt depth of the experience had been limited by this absence. This felt-sense of 'something big' being missed in this 'absent presence' was communicated repeatedly by the 'white' Irish clients. It was also something that I had become aware of from the earliest phases of the research process. I recognized my hunger to be recognized, acknowledged, be seen and respected by the English Other in all my difference. I did not want to be perceived as something that merely amused but as an individual in my own right.

There was an awareness on reflection, for example, of missed intercultural transference/countertransference dynamics at work in the therapy room. These remained uncovered and unexplored behind the adopted veil of seeming 'sameness' or superficial 'whiteness'. Whereas the 'white' Irish clients appeared to be sensitive to an intercultural relational dimension, there was an assumption that the white English therapist was oblivious to or simply ignored its existence. The therapists/counsellors were assumed to lack awareness of Irish cultural heritage, the joint history, the transgenerational trauma, the intercultural emotional legacy and current experiences of racism or discrimination. This intercultural dimension was assumed to be 'bigger' in the minds of the Irish and of little importance to the English due to the process of colonization. Certain dimensions of the 'Irish cultural self' were felt as being particularly missed in the therapeutic space. These included the differences in verbal and non-verbal communication in the 'white' Irish-English dyad, the Irish lack of identification with 'white middle-class English' counterparts and knowledge of the role Catholicism played both in Irish history and in the Irish client's presentation. This missing led to a fear of 'white' Irish clients' presentations being incorrectly conceptualized and misunderstood. In particular, the misuse of Catholicism as *the* explanatory cultural framework for the affective world of 'white' Irish clients was highlighted. In being perceived as overlooking the greater intercultural landscape, the white English therapist appears to be repeating colonial practices in spite of themselves in a new 'neo-colonial' relationship' (Bhabha, 1984). The therapist may be reinforcing the 'white' Irish client's internalized belief that the Irish intercultural self is indeed of little value within the realms of the dominant culture of the therapy room. By so doing, the Irish mind appears to remain "*enveloped, and to an extent suffocated, in an English mental embrace*" (Lee, 1989:627).

### 5.2.2 Postcolonial Avoidance Strategies

On the other hand, however, the inquiry-participants became aware, on reflection, of collective defensive practices or transgenerational strategies they used in order to avoid a focus on the intercultural dimension of the relationship in this specific therapeutic relationship. The main strategies of silencing the traumatic relational past and hiding or adapting the 'Irish cultural self' in relationship is once again indicative of processes identified in the trauma literature (Herman, 1992; Payrhuber, 2012). These strategies not only served to defend against a felt sense of potential discrimination but also to avoid the internalized shame, self-blame, guilt, anger, sadness and loss

evoked in this intercultural space. Just as their forefathers had adopted the strategies of silencing the Irish culture in interaction with the white English colonizer, so did the 'white' Irish clients with the white English therapist/counsellor. Deeply aware of the cultural differences and the difficult associated emotions, the 'white' Irish clients appear to adapt to and thus 'collude' with the white English Other in maintaining a pretence of cultural 'sameness' which emerged as only skin-deep.

One of the unique findings of this study is the description of intercultural processes and their potential impact on the therapeutic work. The establishment of the working alliance is one such example. The inquiry-participants described how, if at all possible, they bonded with a minority identity beyond the counsellors' 'Englishness'. If this minority identity could not be identified, the work proved lacking. This minority identity 'bonding' facilitated the continuing suppression of the difficult emotions originating in the joint colonial past. In all inquiry-participants' stories of their therapeutic experiences, a consistent process of avoiding these emotions in managing the relationship could be identified. The difference remained unvoiced. The therapists obliged. Bríd described "*working hard, unnecessarily hard*" to please her "*rejecting*", "*shaming*" and "*oppressing*" white English therapist. She spoke of finally finding a healthy 'bond' with a Scottish therapist built on being 'outsiders'. The rage Bríd felt for the white English therapist accompanied her unprocessed into the inquiry. Ailish spoke of her years of struggling alone with processing the "*anger*" and "*inferiority*" she felt towards her white English therapist. She never shared her process in therapy for fear of 'upsetting' the English counterpart. Ailish described in retrospect how the missing cultural piece had led to the experiencing of oppression. Therese shared her experiences of sidestepping the "*shadowy place*" of "*shared histories*" by avoiding any reference to the cultural difference in her therapeutic space. She feared feeling 'inferior' in doing so. Dermot spoke of bonding with his initially assumed 'English' therapist's disclosed Irish 'mother-self'. He described how the disclosure "*shifted*" the interaction into a more comfortable space. Any uncomfortable confrontation with therapist's 'English-father-self' was avoided. Gerry reflected on cultural difference being left outside his therapy room and, with it, the fear and inferiority he associated with this colonial dynamic. Tom described his 'religious self' bonding with that of his English therapist. He reflected that the cultural difference was thus not brought to the "*consciousness*" of the therapy room. Joanne, who disclosed a fear of being "*pigeon-holed*" as an "*old-fashioned Irish Catholic*" by white English therapists, had never entered therapy with a white English therapist.

This fragile pretence and joint-avoidance of the 'cultural difference' in dialogue, however, bears strong resemblance to the process of 'colonial mimicry', which Bhabba (1984) identified as one of the objectives of colonization itself. The 'white' Irish client appears to be very proficient in 'acting white' and moving into the therapist's frame of reference (Fanon, 1967). They accepted the therapeutic support, but the price of the 'succour' appears to be the Irish cultural self (Gavin, 2001; Kenny, 1985). In such a conspiracy of silence, colonial dynamics may survive unchallenged and the

unresolved transgenerational trauma may intensify (Duran et al., 2006; Payrhuber, 2012; Brave Heart, 2000). Some of the inquiry-participants described imagery and powerful dreams connected with the historical trauma, transgenerational reminders which had until then remained, I would suggest, unintegrated, alive and split-off in the collective memories of the 'white' Irish clients (Herman, 1992). The larger intercultural dimension of the relationship, which may be the source of the clients' difficulties, is at risk of being overlooked or avoided.

### *5.2.3 Confronting Postcolonial Emotional Experiencing*

Although a different context to that of the therapeutic encounter of a 'white' Irish-English dyad, I assume the dialogic encounter between the 'white' Irish client group and the white English therapist/counsellor group to be a form of parallel process which serves in providing an insight into the intercultural dynamics which may be at play in the therapy room when a 'white' Irish client and a white English therapist/counsellor work together (Hakeem, 2010).

On introduction of the possibility of such an encounter, for example, the 'white' Irish client group communicated in their words a sense of tentativeness, danger and fear at the prospect of confronting the English counterparts with themes that had emerged from the inquiry. The pre-transference appeared to be fuelled with internal representations of such a confrontation with the English Other and the atmosphere of the inquiry took on a solemn and heavy note. The core process established in the grounded theory model came alive. Although the 'white' Irish clients expressed a strong desire to dialogue with white English therapists on the themes emerging from our inquiry, they also disclosed their fear of the white English therapists' retaliation. Most prevalent was the fear of being "*laughed at*", "*not taken seriously*" and "*attacked*".

However, both groups entered the intercultural space in a respectful, open and reflective manner, which facilitated the difficult verbalization of *some* of the emerging experiences and senses. The attendees worked hard to 'break' the 'conspiracy of silence' and establish for the first time a constructive dialogic space. The 'white' Irish clients broke the taboo and began to find words for the transgenerational trauma as it was experienced in their affective worlds. The white English therapist/counsellor group listened. They disclosed their assumptions regarding the 'white' Irish client group and acknowledged how they have been missing their 'white' Irish clients to date.

Although the silence was broken in the dialogue, transgenerational relational processes identified in the model appeared to come into play during the encounter. Despite the white English therapists' disclosure of racialising constructs, which they collectively carry vis-à-vis the Irish group, the Irish group expressed no verbal reactions. However, I could feel a rage crescendo in the energy in the room and in my own body at times during these disclosures, which felt thick in the silence. Instead of expressing this, the 'white' Irish client group listened in silence and thanked the

therapists/counsellors for the confirming acknowledgement. Any uncomfortable confrontation was thus avoided. Every effort was made to protect the delicate interaction from any discomfort. Interestingly, as experienced previously by the inquiry-participants, each of the white English therapists/counsellors disclosed in the interaction an identity outside their 'Englishness', with which the Irish clients could identify. They too were colluding in avoiding a potential confrontation between their 'white middle-class English' selves and the 'white' Irish selves.

A striking strategy, which unfolded in the process, was a tendency for some 'white' Irish clients to avoid difficult pieces of interaction by lightening the mood with laughter or jokes. Although the silence was broken on one level, the deep negative emotions remained below the surface hidden behind the humour. The 'white' Irish group in so doing appeared to be playing into the 'acceptable clown' stereotype, which they assumed, put their counterparts at ease (Bhabba, 1984). The adaptive strategy identified by the inquiry-participants during the cooperative inquiry seemed to be triggered automatically like a transgenerationally learned behaviour in the dialogue. The familiar relational status quo was thus upheld and the 'silence' pertaining to difficult intercultural emotions reinstated (Payrhuber, 2011). Only in the reflective, and once again safe, space of the 'white' Irish client group review following the dialogic process, were difficult emotions such as rage, distrust and discomfort voiced. Again, the core construct of a desire to reveal the cultural self while fearing the repercussions of doing so became evident. However, the dialogue had provided the experiential platform on which to build on future interactions and was experienced as an initial positive step towards a collective healing.

Interestingly, many of 'white' Irish clients' assumptions regarding the white English therapists/counsellors' Irish stereotypes were confirmed in the dialogue. Stereotypes, i.e. "*clown/stupid*" and "*terrorist/threat*", "*inferior*", emerged spontaneously for the white English workshop-participants in the dialogue, as did associations with the Irish accent, e.g. old-fashioned Catholic imagery, "*navvies*" and "*united families*". Although disclosing that the intercultural dimension of the relationship had not been consciously incorporated in conceptualizations of 'white' Irish clients' presentation, the therapists described a disturbing felt-sense of threat, shame, guilt and stuckness, which had emerged for them when working with these clients. Such feelings also emerged for the white English participants in the dialogue when presented with themes of transgenerational relational trauma and its affective legacy. The stuckness reminded me of the process of 'zombification' (Payrhuber, 2011). The therapist appeared helpless, motionless as if overwhelmed by a sudden awareness of the cultural trauma in the room. It is important to note that such emotions have been associated with the inability to develop empathy with the client (Parker et al., 2002).

A lack of knowledge pertaining to this joint colonial history and the associated cultural differences initially silenced the therapists, as did the extent of discrepancy between their own understanding

of the cultural background of their 'white' Irish clients and that of the Irish group. There was, however, a sense, on reflection, that an awareness of these historical experiences existed but at an affective un verbalized level, as if it had always been known but never thought (Bollas, 1989; Schwab, 2010). The explanatory theoretical meaning-making discourse was missing for a felt intercultural affective world (Bracken et al., 1998; Gavin, 2001; Tilki et al., 2009). This would suggest that an important countertransfere ntial dimension to such an encounter is being missed or unused. An unexplored intercultural dynamic would appear to operate unchecked in the encounter. Burma et al., (1998) stress that if we allow cultural dynamics to operate unacknowledged in therapy they may prove to be a liability. However, he added that if used as a source of information, they could prove to be a rich resource.

#### *5.2.4 Identifying Missing Pieces Through a Postcolonial Conceptualization*

The critical finding of the discrepancy between the client and therapist groups' conceptualization of the intercultural relationship between 'white' Irish clients and that of the white English therapists' needs to be addressed at this juncture. The 'white' Irish clients stressed the transgenerational trauma arising from colonization and Famine as *the* pertinent cultural backdrop to such a conceptualization. The white English therapists/counsellors, on the other hand, disclosed a lack of knowledge and awareness of such a background. The possible consequences for therapeutic work of the lack of awareness of such cultural differences have been outlined by Dogra et al. (2005). The white English workshop-participants relied on a subjective, unformulated explanatory framework emerging from their own pre-reflective experiencing. In light of the model developed in the inquiry, I assert that such a framework is grossly inadequate and runs the risk of being counter-therapeutic. This is not to say that all 'white' Irish clients have negative experiences of therapy. In line with Thompson et al., 1994, it was evident from the study that the clients found therapists competent in spite of the avoidance of 'intercultural/interracial' themes. However, the subtleties and total complexity of the presentation were not believed to be appreciated and the 'white' Irish clients experienced with that a sense of "*being missed*" and of "*loss*".

John McGahern, for example, commented:

*"Everything that we inherit, the rain, the skies, the speech, and anybody who works in the English language in Ireland knows that there's the dead ghost of Gaelic in the language we use and listen to and that those things will reflect our Irish identity"*

- McGahern (in interview with Maher, 2011:190)

The 'white' Irish clients similarly stressed the importance of a white English therapist's appreciation of origins of Hiberno-English and of the differences they perceive to exist between Hiberno-English and 'standard' English. In assuming that both the therapist and the client speak an identical verbal and non-verbal language, as suggested in the dialogue, English therapists may run

the risk of being insensitive to the subtleties of the communication in the interaction (Davies, 1999). Kenny (1985), for example, associated certain aspects of the Irish-English intercultural communication style such as 'indirect communication' and 'avoidance of self-revelation' with transgenerational relational trauma. In the 'white' Irish clients' experiences, these traits have been misunderstood as 'deviousness' or an 'inability to be intimate' by white English counterparts. The defensive function that the strategies served in the colonial relational is overlooked.

In a similar vein, in the intercultural dimension to their relationship, the 'white' Irish clients were confirmed in their belief that emotions such as 'shame' and 'guilt' in an Irish client's presentation may be understood by the white English counterpart as simply arising from a rigid Catholic upbringing. The more complex differentiated origin of these emotions in terms of transgenerational trauma may be overlooked. Keneally (1998), for example, identified a transgenerational shame in the Irish associated with surviving their historical trauma. O'Connor (2013) identified a 'malignant' shame, which he proposed was generated by a colonial mechanism aimed at maintaining control. Similarly, Catholicism may be conceptualized as the source of a client's ill-health instead of as a cultural signifier of resistance/resilience. Hutton (1991) describes how Nationalism and Catholicism combined as an integrationist ideology in the Irish Free State, just as Unionism and Protestantism did in Northern Ireland. The punitive structural form of the Irish Catholic Church, which in the inquiry was understood as being grounded in colonial ideology, may be overlooked (Gavin, 2001; O'Connor, 2013). Furthermore, acceptable stereotypes of the Irish as 'humourous' and 'comic' may blind the therapist to the unwanted anger hidden behind the façade. Spontaneously emerging racial stereotypes such as these can lead to recurring ethnicising enactments in the therapeutic space. Unacknowledged micro-traumas, in the form of the misunderstandings and misrecognitions mentioned above, may continue to re-traumatize the client in the therapeutic space (Bell, 1997). Ignoring the possibility of unconscious internalized positions, transmitted over the generations, can lead to the misreading of all therapeutic processes from the assessment to the final outcome.

Moane (2006) points out that US and UK models of therapy are applied to Irish clients without consideration of such cultural differences. A number of theorists, mainly from the realms of sociology, have shown how culturally insensitive assessment procedures used with 'white' Irish clients have given rise to incorrect diagnoses and treatment (Commander et al., 1999; Cabot, 1990; Barrett, 2006). This research points, for example, to distinct differences between 'Hiberno-English' and 'standard English'. Hiberno-English was understood as constructed from a combination of Gaelic and English. Herr (2005) similarly reminds that Gaelic technically does not have words for 'yes' and 'no' but uses modulated repetition in their stead. Barrett (2006) found that psychiatric testing mechanisms have proven to be exceptionally insensitive to such particularities of Hiberno-English and to the Gaelic self's culture in general. Herr (2005:151) concludes "*From the perspective*

*of European imperialism, the high incidence of perceived psychosis in Ireland and the Caribbean demands a response as complex as the overdetermination of that psychosis. In a world still struggling to become fully postcolonial, that response must aim for a world-historical comparative interpretation".*

A whole layer of understanding is thus left untapped, and I propose that the full, potential emotional depth of the therapeutic work can never be reached. As long as the client is allowed to disappear into the white English therapists cultural worldview and frame of reference, transgenerationally transmitted colonial processes will continue to operate. The transgenerational pain and internalized dynamics may be living on in their original form as unformulated experiencing without meaning but exercising immense power in the present relational (Payrhuber, 2011; Herman, 1992).

## 6 CONCLUSIONS

### 6.1 'Race' and Racialization

This study confirms Ryde (2009), Tuckwell (2002), McKenzie-Mavinga (2002) and Alleyne (2006) that past colonial relationships continue to impact on the present-day relating between peoples of ex-colonies and their ex-colonizers, also in the therapeutic space. However, these researchers based their work on the assumption that all Western European peoples of 'white' skin colour belong to the colonizing population. As in the broader discourse on cultural difference and exclusion, researcher, theorists and practitioners in the psychology world appear to continue to define 'racial/ethnic difference' in terms of rigid 'black/white' constructs. Such 'chromotism' (Ahmed, 1996:10, cited in Fraser, 1999) continues to invest skin colour with the meaning of racial difference. Additionally, such an assumption excludes 'white-skinned' ethnic minorities who have had similar colonial or 'black' experiences in their past. It is important to remember Foucault's (2003) warning at this stage that discourse is related to power, in that it operates according to the rules of exclusion and is controlled by objects, ritual and the privileged, i.e. what may be spoken of, where and how one may speak and who may speak. If a group, such as the 'Irish', is not spoken of and may not speak, it is rendered powerless.

As both the inquiry and dialogue show, 'Irishness' is perceived as an embodied trait, which is perceived by some white English therapists as "*enduring*" as a "*black person's skin*". 'Appearing white' and 'acting white' is, I argue, not the same as 'being white'. As discovered in my study, 'being the same' as the colonizing Other for peoples of all ex-colonies appears to mean 'being anglicized' and 'adapting' to the colonizing Other's desired image of the 'ex-colonized'.

I argue that discourse on difference in counselling psychology continues to hover at a superficial level and the possible depth of understanding has not yet been reached. As such, this is the first study, as far as I am aware, to take up the challenge of looking beyond 'skin' colour to the socioeconomic and political origins of the process of racialization. In line with hypotheses put forward by Bracken et al., (1998) and Lloyd (2000), this study shows that colonization and its corresponding traumatic racialization processes also operate among peoples of 'white' skin colour. Ireland may have the superficial appearance of 'being white', but at an intrapsychic level, I contend, that the Irish are 'non-white', like all peoples from ex-colonies. Whatever historians, postcolonialists and psychologists deem to be the objective 'truth', the 'white' Irish clients in this study perceive Ireland to be an ex-colony and the Irish to be survivors of transgenerational historical trauma. This finding points to an urgent need for therapists/counsellors to look beyond apparent 'sameness' in conceptualizing their therapeutic work to ascertain possible intercultural relational dynamics, which may impact upon their work. Otherwise, they run the risk of 'psychic disconnection' by decontextualizing the individual and the relationship from the cultural context in which they are inevitably located. This will compromise their work (Bodnar, 2004) and can lead to



the reinforcing internalized racism (Lawrence, 2003).

## 6.2 Healing through Dialogue, Knowledge and Understanding?

*See we're like a child that's been battered  
Has to drive itself out of its head because it's frightened  
Still feels all the painful feelings  
But they lose contact with the memory*

*And this leads to massive self-destruction  
alcoholism, drug addiction  
All desperate attempts at running  
And in its worst form  
Becomes actual killing*

*And if there ever is gonna be healing  
There has to be remembering  
And then grieving  
So that there then can be forgiving  
There has to be knowledge and understanding*

- Sinead O'Connor: "Famine", *Universal Mother* (1994).

Generally, the findings point to the urgent need for trainers, supervisors and practitioners in all schools of psychology to incorporate the cultural dimension of the therapeutic relationship into the conceptualization of all forms of therapy. Unfortunately, to date, few training courses include attention to the cultural implications for effective therapeutic work. If they do, it is usually in the form of an 'add-on' element (Tuckwell, 2002; McKenzie-Mavinga, 2005). Incorporating the transcultural dimension is less about replacing the various orientations and more about expanding the conceptualization of the therapeutic endeavour to include the cultural. This may involve adapting assessment and diagnosis procedures in line with the cultural background of clients (Bhui et al., 2007; Sue et al., 1987). Walls (2004) asserts that such an incorporation involves a move from the universalising of the 'eurocentric' perspective to recognition of cultural pluralism.

### 6.2.1 Reworking Constructs

Within the area of transcultural counselling psychology, this study highlights the necessity of reworking the discourse pertaining to the cultural constructs of 'race/ethnicity'. Following from the study, I would urge that the processes that have engineered these be examined and made transparent, particularly as they function in society and in the therapy room today. The research suggests that the 'white' Irish client group, for example, may be falling into a gap politically, socially and within the domains of counselling psychology. There are few safety nets. As yet, there has been no discourse developed to incorporate the specificity and needs of the 'Irish group' as a 'white-skinned' colonized and racialized European ethnic group. The Irish have been excluded from the

discourse on difference in multiple contexts due to perceived 'whiteness'. This, I argue, has led to colonial relational dynamics being maintained in societal structures, in relationships and in the intrapsychic worlds of both English and Irish interactional partners. This exclusion has been co-created. In answer to prejudice, exclusion and their invisible status, the 'Irish' appear to have buried their 'Irishness', their trauma, their culture behind the sameness of skin colour. In so doing, they too have reinforced their invisibility by adapting, disappearing and losing their 'Irishness' by 'acting white' (Gavin, 2001) or 'culturally bleaching' themselves (Gabriel 1998) in the intercultural space. This appears to be the intergenerationally transmitted reaction in interaction with the ex-colonizer. The 'Irish' seem to have adapted to structures constructed by others instead of demanding recognition through their own voice. Gavin (2001) noted that only in the last 30 years have the 'Irish' in England formed any lobbying organizations. The voices are still only whispering and are rarely acknowledged.

Within the postcolonial discourse, Gibbons (1996) argues that 'Celticism' adds a new dimension to the concept of 'race', which he contends is not just based on 'epidermal schema'. Kiberd (1996) argues that 'Celticism' can be used interchangeably with 'Orientalism' when reading postcolonial literature. He maintains that the processes of colonization and racialization were identical across the globe. These theorists call for the postcolonial paradigm, particularly the 'black-white' divide, to be reworked. Being 'white' in the political sense has little to do with skin colour but with multiple racisms and oppressions produced by social structures and socio-economic-political conditions in differing forms in differing contexts (Ignatiev, 1995, Lewis et al., 2004). Some historians and sociologists have begun to break with the postcolonial tradition of theorizing at the 'epidermal' level to the exclusion of the Irish dimension. Connolly (2003) draws connections between the histories of the Irish and Native Americans. Ghosh (2003) and Viswanathan (2003) connect the colonial processes in India and Ireland. The US sociologists Coll et al. (2012) have begun to explore the connections between Sioux and Irish multigenerational trauma and its healing.

However, in the area of psychotherapy and counselling, this inclusion of a postcolonial Ireland in the transcultural theorizing, research and practice has not taken place. Lago (2006), in his treatise of the issues of 'race' and power, describes the origins of the 'pseudo-scientific mythology of racism' to be embedded in the economic and political framework of colonialism and plantocracy. He warns counsellors that they "*must take note of the impact such historical relations may have on any therapy relationships they develop in the present*" (p.28). Unfortunately, due to the focus on skin colour as the signifier of 'racial' difference rather than on the process of racialization itself, many groups including the 'Irish' remain outside the discourse. As identified in the study, such oversights may lead to clients continuing to live in silence with the consequences of unacknowledged transgenerational trauma. Under certain conditions, these clients may experience themselves shifting into disempowering and oppressing positions in therapy.

Building on these research findings, I stress again the ethical importance of an exploration of Ireland's postcolonial position as a starting point to reworking the current discourse on 'race/ethnicity' in counselling psychology today as:

*"One of the main strengths of postcolonial analysis is that it widens, instead of narrows, the interpretive perspective, which is another way of saying it liberates instead of further constricting and colonizing the mind"*

Said (2003:179)

I believe this to be a responsibility we must urgently address. Any avoidance of such an exploration may facilitate the proliferation of existing unacknowledged colonial processes within the structures of the discipline.

### *6.2.2 Working with Transgenerational Trauma*

In working with the legacy of colonization in particular, like Alleyne (2006), McKenzie-Mavinga (2002) and Moane (2006), I too find that the trauma literature provides many concepts that make sense of these dynamics and give direction for therapy. In the case of individual relational trauma, trauma theorists such as Herman (1992) stress the importance of the provision of a facilitating space in which the victim no longer needs to fear retaliation and revictimization. Here, the survivor can voice, process and integrate traumatic experiences together with an empathic witness (Gerson, 2009). This needs to be a place where the individual is acknowledged as a subject with his/her own set of cultural and historical meanings. If the white English therapist/counsellor has developed an awareness of a shared colonial past, the legacies that may be impacting on the current relationship by way of cultural transference/countertransference dynamics, certain enactments and 'unformulated experiences' (Stern, 1997) may be identified and made transparent on reflection and in supervision and used for subsequent processing.

Sometimes, traumatic experiences live on only in affective and non-verbal states outside clients' experiences. Clucas (2009) found that people generally have limited awareness of generative pathways leading to their present circumstances. Unlike the 'clients' in this study, the general client base is not familiar with psychological concepts. It is, therefore, up to the therapist/counsellor to weave the multidimensional tapestry, which serves as the possible background to the client's presentation and also perhaps the key to their healing. Payrhuber (2011), drawing on Heimann (1950), urges therapists to listen out for collective silent transgenerational voices in the therapy room by asking themselves the following questions: Who is talking? To whom? And who is answering? Countertransference experiences such as guilt, shame and anger, which may have led to a sense of stuckness as indicated above, may begin to take on new meaning and become a rich resource for the future instead of a wall of silence.

The workshop dialogue, I believe, opened a facilitating space for the 'white' Irish client group. Although not all, certain cultural experiences were voiced for the first time to white English Others. The 'white' Irish client group tested the ground by disclosing the themes I believe they felt were safe. I sensed they were relating at the edge of the intercultural shadowlands. Pushing cautiously into the shadows, the 'white' Irish attendees tended to avoid the most difficult emotions. It was, however, a beginning. In this reflective space, I believe, the process of healing may have begun. Unvoiced experiences were held and reflected on in the review thereafter. The workshop-participants dialogued together on how these emotions could be voiced safely in such future intercultural encounters.

In the dialogic space, the white English therapist/counsellor group also named their intercultural experiences, e.g. of spontaneous unintended racial stereotyping, confirmed their counterparts and listened to the Irish cultural selves presented. This dialogue facilitated reflection on the origins of such experiencing and on their impact in the present.

Theories used to make sense of the experiencing in the collaboration were those of trauma (oppressor/oppressed), psychodynamics (cultural transference/countertransference dynamics) and transactional analysis (controlling parent/adapted child). The 'stuckness' experienced in the Irish-English intercultural space was conceptualized in terms of a codependency, symbiosis and enmeshment dating back to the colonial period (Kenny, 1985; Greenslade, 1992). Healing and recovery was felt to revolve around the need for voicing, acknowledgement, confirmation, respect, empowerment and integration (Lloyd, 2000). The deconstruction involved first of all and most importantly the validation and acceptance of such racial enactments in a safe, respectful space. This action then facilitated sustained joint inquiry and reflection. Coates et al. (2003) point to the importance of such reflective functioning in the parent as a protective factor against the transmission of transgenerational trauma to the children. Trauma may otherwise continue to be transmitted silently.

The psychological effects of trauma have been mapped by many theorists onto cultures, which have endured trauma (Payrhuber, 2011). In these theories, therapy is defined as the process of decolonization. The past, in these cases, is not simply one's individual past but also a social history, its content and institutions. The past relational does not merely date back to one's childhood but to a relational history, which spans multiple generations. Lloyd (2000) argues that it is not a matter of recovering from the intercultural past but of learning to live with this past in the present without allowing it to control us.

I believe that 'recovery' from such transgenerational trauma is just that. It is the integration in manageable pieces of our transgenerational trauma into our present-day living. This involves the process of revisiting both the individual and transgenerational past in order to process it and lay it

to rest. In working with clients, I encourage them to elaborate on their present problem by free-associating images and seemingly insignificant details with past situations or other situations in their social worlds and in those of their families and ancestors. This often allows us to weave together a history which is much greater than either of us but which includes us both together in concert with a multitude of others (Gandhi, 1998). Duran et al. (2008) refer to transgenerational trauma as a 'soul wounding'. They describe the recovery process as entailing the reawakening of the dead of past generations by acknowledging them in words, retelling their story and finally laying their ghosts to rest. Such work no doubt challenges the epistemological and ontological foundations of the dominant schools of thought in psychology at present. It calls for counsellors/therapists to risk chaos and start incorporating other worldviews and meanings into their assessment, 'diagnosis' and treatment processes.

Such work will no doubt demand that the therapists open up their cognitive-perceptual system to uncomfortable or unfamiliar senses living in the therapy space. During the dialogue, for example, the white English therapists disclosed feelings, e.g. threat, guilt, shame, that they had been holding unprocessed in their therapeutic work with 'white' Irish clients. They described these effects as bodily experiences and energies, which defied explanation at the time. Only within the context of our intercultural dialogue, did these sensations begin to make sense. Such disclosures highlight how essential it is for therapists and supervisors alike to develop what Payrhuber (2011) refers to as an embodied sensitivity of 'their own subjective positions' through reflective embodied awareness practice. Like Payrhuber, I conceptualize "*pain (as) an experience where soma, psyche and the social or political are already interwoven, interrelated and even constitute each other*" (2011:30). In order to understand such pain, a broad holistic understanding of the interplay of the historical, cultural, societal, interpersonal, intrapsychic and bodily realms of experiencing needs to be acquired. It is the responsibility of mental health organizations and training institutes to ensure that practitioners have such awareness and skills to answer the needs of their client group.

Whelan (2005) suggests that the key to breaking the cycle of transgenerational trauma is to move away from the negative internal representations of the trauma to a more enabling form of culture by involving oneself in one's own cultural practices with pride. Coll et al. (2012) cites Stone's (2003) claim that it is necessary to reclaim one's cultural identity in order to move on. Incorporating aspects of the client's culture into the therapeutic relationship, e.g. language, rituals, practices, has been shown to improve mental health<sup>31</sup>. Clucas (2009) urges practitioners to move away from an exclusive focus on 'negative' cultural factors in assessment and to include positive factors. Recognizing the value in terms of resilience that cultural practices offer, Greene (1993) recommends a combination strategy of therapy and cultural practices as 'best practice' for mental health healing.

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<sup>31</sup> The use of joint cultural genograms has been proven useful in such an approach (Coll et al., 2012).

However, if the 'white' Irish client rejects these cultural practices as 'shameful' or 'backward', as suggested in the research findings, and the therapist fails to acknowledge the value of such practices, a great resource will have been overlooked. Coll et al. (2012), in their application of learnings from their work with Sioux in the United States, suggest that the key for healing among the Irish is *"to move away from an individual's memory that internalizes past traumas as depression to a more culturally enabling form which embraces cultural practices and pride"* (p.97). They cite a case in a narrative example in which great-grandchildren of Irish Famine survivors broke the transgenerational cycle of alcoholism and abuse for themselves by reconnecting with their Irish culture. Coll et al. (2012) also note that survivors of massive trauma display a broad range of coping mechanisms. The 'white' Irish clients in this study identified a tendency of the Irish to process experiencing through story-telling, to channel emotions through song or to use humour as a defence mechanism. Such knowledge can support the therapist in the therapeutic endeavour. As I reflected, for example, on the use of song as a means of channelling emotions, numerous second-generation Irish musicians<sup>32</sup> who have contributed so much to England's cultural fabric came to mind. I asked myself whether this channel of affective expression may have been internalized in their childhood and used at some level later as a way of expressing difficult emotions.

### 6.2.3 Developing Cultural Competence

Heath (1992:33) points out that oppression is rarely intentional or carried out of malevolent motives: *"I do not need to be malevolent in order to oppress people. I can oppress people with the best of intentions out of ignorance and I may perpetuate my ignorance to protect my power"*. Khan (1974, 1979) suggests that the therapist may unwittingly take on the role of the colonizer in the therapeutic dyad and warns against a form of control, which may be masked behind a veil of interpretations, empathy and understanding. Specific essential competencies for intercultural work have been proposed by numerous writers in the multicultural/transcultural arena, albeit along the lines of the 'black/white' divide (Carter, 1995; Sue et al., 1990). Bhui et al. (2007), for example, drawing on Carter (1995), suggest the following as the key requirements for racially inclusive psychotherapy in the UK context:

- **The therapist needs to be skilled in exploring racial and cultural identity**
- **The therapist must understand that, for some patients, life events with racial elements are part of a social reality that can become an internal representation and that can emerge in their mental life, fantasy and beliefs**
- **The therapist must have the capacity to perceive, apprehend and think through the primitive feelings of aggression, hatred, humiliation and shame that accompany racial encounters, conflicts and enactments'**

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<sup>32</sup> Shane McGowan, Morrissey, Kevin Rowland, Cáit O'Riordan, Kate Bush, Elvis Costello, Noel and Liam Gallagher, John Lydon (Johnny Rotten) to mention a few.

Bhui et al. (2007) further outline recommendations for culturally capable practice in psychotherapy. They propose that therapists should:

- consider their preconceptions about the race and ethnicity of the patient and of that person's family
- recognise that an individual may be quite different from other members of the same racial and ethnic group
- consider how racial and ethnic differences between themselves and the patient might affect psychotherapy; these include:
  - differences in conceptualisation of mental health and illness
  - differences in conceptualisation of the self in relation to family and community
  - differences in communication styles
- acknowledge that power, privilege and racism might affect interaction with patients
- when in doubt about the importance of race and ethnicity and treatment err on the side of discussion
- keep learning about issues of race and ethnicity, and become a 'mini-ethnographer' with patients and the public
- notice, apprehend and think through the racial transference so that it is understood, acquires therapeutic value and is not re-enacted in the consulting room

To date, the importance of such competencies within the 'white dyad' has gained little attention (Tuckwell, 2002). As suggested above, the focus on 'race' as a rigid 'black/white' divide as opposed to the underlying racialization process has hindered a broader examination of the original socioeconomic and political functions of these engineered constructs and their relational legacy.

These research findings suggest that therapists should adopt a form of postcolonial dialogical and dialectical strategy in working with *all* clients. I have constructed a working suggestion below which, although emerging from a study relating to the themes of 'race/ethnicity', may prove useful in exploring all aspects of cultural difference:

Create a 'reflective cultural mindmap' with words and images which emerge for the therapist on carrying out the following:

- Inquire into the background of all their clients. If not immigrants themselves, have they descended from an immigrant family?
- Note spontaneous countertransferential reactions following the response and process these senses, emotions and cognitions in supervision and therapy.
- Reflect on the images of the client's culture transmitted in the environment e.g. in the media, history books, by politicians, by writers, by family and friends
- Attain an overview of the collective history of their clients: Is there a history of collective trauma, colonization, racialization in the client's collective past? What stereotypes, myths, secrets, emotional connections etc emerge in the recounting?
- Inquire into the historical relationship existing between themselves and their clients: Is there a history of colonization or war? Reflect on a possible joint cultural genogram.
- Collaborate with their clients in ascertaining the meaning which their history and culture holds for them. Reflect on the identities the client may hold. Are they integrated? What is the client's relationship with the dominant culture? Do the clients identify any points of cultural difference between themselves and the therapist?
- Immerse a little in the culture of their clients e.g native language (present and past), verbal and non-verbal communication, visual arts, economy, politics, society, religion, healing forms, forms of resilience and resistance which were adopted historically.

This cultural mindmap could be used in conceptualizing a client's presentation of, for example, 'shame' from additional cultural perspectives. Mental distress may arise from family, from early relational dynamics or from life events, but the client's experiencing may be further complicated by the legacy of transgenerational trauma in the wake of colonization, civil war or famine. Similarly, the research shows that minor traumatic events such as micro-aggressions, e.g. misreading the defence mechanism of indirect communication as the inability to attain intimacy, which may occur at any one particular time in the present-day therapeutic relationship, need to be contextualized in terms of the long-standing relational traumas experienced by the ethnic group as a whole in the course of their historical relationship. In order to reach the full potential of the encounter, therapists need to enter into clients' frame of reference to understand the client and their expectations, both within their own cultural context and at the interface of their culture and that of the therapist (Ivey et al., 2003).

This knowledge may point to additional options for clients, may empower them by dilating their frame of reference, may expand meanings and open up possibilities all from within the client's frame of reference. Developing such cultural and political awareness is, in my view, an initial step in the development of a critically consciousness and politically aware practice, which hinders to a great extent proliferation of neo-colonial processes in therapy.

#### *6.2.4 Training Culturally Competent Practitioners*

The research findings also have repercussions for therapist training and supervision. They support the sociologist Clucas' (2009) call for "*specialist culturally sensitive services* (for Irish service users),



*including the training of culturally sensitive health workers who are educated about the Irish culture, Irish racism and stereotyping” (p.292).* Within the transcultural domain of psychology and psychotherapy, writers and researchers alike have stressed the importance of incorporating cultural issues into the fabric of the training. Ivey et al. (2003) warn that “...approaches...that do not include multicultural issues are very much part of the problem...as they work within the cultural status quo” (p.327). If ignored, the therapist runs the risk of further oppressing the clients by enforcing their own ‘eurocentric’ frame of reference. Tuckwell (2006), Watson (2011), Ryde (2011) and McKenzie-Mavinga (2002) address this issue, offering suggestions as to how training and supervision around the racial/ethnic dimension of culture could be implemented to ensure that psychotherapists acquire the knowledge and skills required to recognize and meet the needs of black ethnic minority groups. Ryde (2011) advises that such a training for ‘white’ trainers and supervisors should cover three basic areas:

- **An understanding and awareness of oneself within a racial environment**
- **Theory about white racial issues within a therapeutic context**
- **Skill development to work therapeutically, as a white person, within a racial environment**

In light of the research findings from this study, I would adapt this list as follows to one which applies to all practitioners:

- **Knowledge of ideological and political origins of racialization processes within a postcolonial framework**
- **An awareness of how such processes operate in society today**
- **An understanding and awareness of oneself as an embodied, social and political being within a racializing environment**
- **Theory about racial issues within a therapeutic context with particular attention being given to the affects, thoughts and sensations emerging in the relationship (or countertransference experiences in psychodynamic terms ).**
- **Skill development to work therapeutically as a member of their ‘race’ within a multitude of racial environments. Note ‘race’ can change depending on the socioeconomic and political context one inhabits at any one time.**
- **The ability to recognize and accept the identity the client allocates the therapist in the cultural transference instead of disclosing a ‘minority identity’ with which the client may identify. This involves learning to tolerate unpleasant positionings e.g. being perceived as a ‘middle-class white English ex-colonizer’ in order to work with any possible arising negative affective experiencing (transference). A voicing of the anger may thus be facilitated and an alienation of the words from the traumatic transgenerational experiences in the past.**

In training therapists and supervisors in the use of such a strategy of postcolonial conceptualizing in each new therapeutic relationship, I believe the past and present performative and co-constructed aspects of race/ethnicity can be uncovered to a great extent and the constricting and excluding idea of race as a specific disposition discarded. This, I argue, has the capacity to inject the

therapeutic relationship with a new, flexible, dilating energy which has the capacity to move the work to new levels of meaning and healing.

### **6.3 Impact of the Research: Self and Participants**

As I sit here writing these final words, I find myself looking back on the emotional roller-coaster this research has been for me. I have invested energy, precious years and much money and have often found myself exhausted, ill, desperate, vulnerable, disappointed and lonely. I moved from Europe to the Middle East and back again. I lost my mother and found myself not only grieving for her but for all the generations that went before. I have put many ghosts to rest.

Although difficult, this research journey has also been a rich and humbling experience. I believe it has contributed greatly to my personal development as a researcher, psychotherapist and a 'white' Catholic-Irish human being. I have found at last an internal pride in my Irishness. My shame and anger have lightened. I speak differently about my background, more measured, with a lot less confused emotion. The journey has taken me to painful places and dark shadowy corners but has thrown some light on these and has made them less frightening. It has given me a control in these intercultural shadowlands, which I never dreamed possible. I have found a voice that is now prepared to dialogue on all intercultural challenges without fear of being ignored. This learning has similarly changed my psychotherapy practice. I have been confirmed in my intuition that many emotions have a cultural element. I feel less defensive and can 'park' my material more often while still using it to empathically listen to the Other. I have become more flexible and open and can better manage sensitive issues such as 'racialization' in therapy. I am now even more mindful of the need to remain aware of my own countertransference vis-à-vis my clients and have committed myself to remain curious and undertake active research into clients' cultural heritages.

This journey has often led me back to the past, but it has never been about living in the past but about revisiting the past to understand present relational patterns with the aim of changing and gaining control for the future. This process has served the purposes of both acknowledgement and transformation, for myself and my inquiry-participants. This movement between the joint cultural past and present has become even more important in my client work.

Feedback from the cooperative inquiry participants and from the workshop attendees has been positive. These colleagues have described how their knowledge and insight have also deepened. Many have since written to me sharing the ways this research has expanded their personal worlds and enriched their client work.

## 6.4 Critique

### 6.4.1 Contribution and Recommendations

Within the broader area of counselling psychology, the research adds to the still limited qualitative research resource, particularly in the areas of transcultural psychology and practice-based research (Moodley et al., 2006; McLeod, 2003). More specifically, this is also the only study I know of that explores intercultural contact between a 'white' Irish client and a white English therapist/counsellor. Additionally, it is one of the few studies that attempts to link the contextual, interpersonal and intrapsychic within an holistic conceptualization of client presentations.

From a methodological viewpoint, this study shows the advantages of using a group format in accessing data, which reveal unconscious transgenerational dynamics. The group setting allowed the members to connect individual and interpersonal lived experience with a shared historical context. The cooperative inquiry format has ensured that the client's voice is being documented albeit through my own construction process. The usefulness of constructivist grounded theory in building conceptual concepts and explanatory theories from the ground of our actual practice has also been demonstrated.

The inclusion of the workshop allowed the 'Other' voice to be heard and proved to be a confirming and learning experience as well as source of new concepts and ideas for all. It was experienced as a source of exploration, discovery and empowerment. It was not about blame in terms of self or other but about understanding towards a better future. It confirmed my assumption that dialogue is essential in working across cultures.

From a clinical diagnostic and problem formulation point of view, the findings suggest the need for a more comprehensive framework. They highlight the importance of broadening conceptualization parameters to look at not only the genetic, biological and developmental aspects of our clients' presentation but also at the sociopolitical, historical and structural. If the focus is narrowed down to the abstract interpersonal or intrapsychic, a large piece of the puzzle may be missed, as may the client. Damage can be done and unhealthy dynamics reinforced.

Moreover, the findings suggest that the therapeutic relationship can only be conceptualized in context. It is essential that therapists/counsellors broaden their focus to incorporate a level of relationship emerging from the historical. It also indicates the need for therapists/counsellors to *know and own* their historical heritage. This study points to the importance of starting where the client is and not where the therapist wishes to be in the client's eyes.

With regard to treatment planning, this study shows that knowledge of our clients' culture and

language can offer an insight into resources that can be called on in recovery<sup>33</sup>. It also indicates that sensitive attuning to clients' culture and the intercultural space can provide a more complex understanding of the therapist's and client's joint emotional experiencing<sup>34</sup>. Such explanations enrich our understanding.

The research findings also suggest that changes are needed in psychotherapy/counselling training. The focus can no longer be merely on practitioners' immediate therapy work with clients in 'vacuum-packed' therapeutic spaces but must also be on the development of their interdisciplinary thinking to include a familiarity with politics, history, sociology, economics, etc. This, in turn, suggests that psychotherapy/counselling training courses should be revised to incorporate transcultural modules not as an 'add-on' but as an integral part of the course. These interdisciplinary modules should encourage interest in and engagement with history, politics, anthropology, sociology, economics and culture. Dialogic workshops should be arranged to facilitate and develop cultural competency, i.e. reflection, exploration of own internalized intercultural dynamics (e.g. colonial dynamics), empathy, understanding, management. Minority issues and their interface with the cultural selves of the therapists/counsellors should be a constant focus throughout.

The study also highlights a need for us as professionals to involve ourselves as political activists. We need to question constructs and definitions developed in our worlds and constantly update and revise assumptions. Within the area of counselling psychology research and literature, for example, the definition of 'difference' along the lines of skin colour is called into question by these findings. The cooperative inquiry and workshop findings highlight the need to delve beneath the surface of 'race as skin colour' to examine the process of 'racialization' in the intercultural space regardless of perceived skin colour, accent, etc.

The deconstruction and reconstruction of 'difference, presented by this study has broad challenging implications for therapists, not only in England but throughout the globe. This work suggests therapists should adopt a new challenging lens through which to view apparent sameness between themselves and their clients. A new level of awareness must be developed allowing therapists to transcend superficial similarities to access possible hidden wounds in both parties from divisions emerging from past generations but sitting in the present of the therapeutic space. This piece stresses the need for critical reflection on the historical and cultural positions we may unconsciously or subconsciously adopt in the context of our work.

I believe the research also points to our ethical duty to ensure that the historical contextualization and cultural embeddedness of the individual, the relational in addition to that of the theoretical

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<sup>33</sup> In the case of the Irish client, this study suggests that due to their history the Irish immigrant has had to develop resilience, adaptability and an ability to survive in varying cultures.

<sup>34</sup> For example, in this piece the cultural dimensions of shame and anger have been explored and developed.

frameworks used to make sense of both, be examined and incorporated into the conceptualization and process of therapeutic work. If not, we run the risk of reifying unquestioned and often disempowering institutional structures in our therapeutic relationships by unwittingly engineering the client's adaptation to predetermined constructs that may themselves be partly to blame for the distress. We need to actively question structures and their power base and support our clients in acting within the system while being realistic about the limits of their power. We need to be aware that clients' presented distress may originate in oppressive ideologies of which we are also part, e.g. neo-colonial, socioeconomic, political systems. We have a duty to repeatedly explore and examine our knowledges, their histories and agendas as we shift contexts and move through relationships.

The voice of a hidden minority has been acknowledged and documented in this work. Their need for recognition and specific consideration have been expressed and a concrete grounded theory presented which describes the possible origins of these needs. Such 'invisible' minority groups cannot continue to be ignored and disempowered in the legislative arena. As professionals, we must continue asking, being curious and listening to the client. This information needs to be feed back into institutional and governmental levels and considered in legislative policy. In the long term, failure to do so will undoubtedly lead to increased expenditure in the mental health area as client difficulties inevitably become more complex and ingrained.

#### *6.4.2 Limitations*

In addition to the points I have already outlined throughout the document, a number of limitations need to be acknowledged.

The design of this study has been constrained by time and resources. The study may have benefited from more time between meetings and an increase in the number of meetings. Additionally, the inclusion of individual interviews at the end of the cooperative inquiry may have provided a more complex and diverse picture. The study may also have benefited from a series of intercultural workshops over time.

Additionally, I believe that it is essential to remember as a counselling psychologist that clients I may initially assume to be culturally similar to me, due to a similarity of skin colour or accent, for example, may in fact experience their living totally differently to the way I experience my own living. I can never allow myself to fall into the trap of assuming that what I am experiencing in the countertransference is that which my client is experiencing regardless of our 'similarities' at a surface level. I need to be ever-mindful that there are many levels of experiencing within any assumed sameness I may at first identify. I must continue to hold my 'truths' lightly throughout the therapeutic process. In view of this belief, I propose that dialoguing with other 'white' minority groups may shed further light on this multiplicity of experiencing in any work I may undertake with

superficially similar clients. This, in turn, would allow for a deepening of understanding of the intercultural space.

A sample of seven is small. A larger sample, more diverse in age, would have allowed me to capture changes over time and generation. However, my aim was to gain an understanding of this group's experiences, highlight diverse experiences and find some common themes, not to generalize to the public. The findings indicate a number of themes pertinent to our counselling work.

When reflecting on researching in the transcultural area, I am aware of the challenge of the operationalization of participant characteristics. One of the greatest limitations in conducting research in this area is the demand to construct rigid categories that fail to account for intragroup variability (Moodley, 2003) and fluidity of ethnicity (Modood et al., 1997). I too found myself struggling with the fact that I have had to resort to a dichotomy and two rigid categories in operationalizing my participant characteristics. This problematic remains a challenge in the field of research with ethnic minority clients (Moodley et al., 2006). I acknowledge, however, that collective constructs are necessary in order to establish 'truths for now'.

In this research, I have adopted an 'emic', or culturally specific, approach. My main focus was the intercultural dimension of the therapeutic relationship. This is not to say that other factors are not at play. A Kleinian or CBT therapist would no doubt offer a different perspective. For the sake of the research, I have separated the cultural element from the holistic experience. However, these research findings indicated clearly to me that emotions always have a cultural element and that a psychosocial understanding is critical in gaining the total picture of which the therapist/counsellor is always part. I have taken this emotional pain to therapy with this in mind, and it has opened up a new frame of reference in dialogue with my German therapist, incorporating contexts far greater than just the two of us.

## 6.5 Implications for Future Research

As outlined above, this study has implications for research training and practice. It suggests a number of areas in which further research would be of great value for training and practice. Following completion of this piece of research, I would be particularly interested in exploring:

- The specific experiences of second-generation Irish in therapy with white English therapist/counsellor
- 'White' Irish female experiences of therapy in England
- 'White' Irish male experiences of therapy in England
- Similarities and differences in presentations of clients from ex-colonies
- Intercultural assumptions and understanding among therapists/counsellors
- Media and the therapist/counsellor
- The meaning of 'whiteness' to the 'white' Irish client
- The transmission of transgenerational trauma
- The mental health needs of 'white' ethnic groups
- The experiences of other 'white' ethnic groups in therapy in England
- Cultural practices and healing in therapy
- Various combinations of 'white-white' therapeutic dyad
- The use of intercultural workshops in psychotherapy/counselling training
- The effect of broadening conceptualizations of client presentations to include the cultural
- The impact of including an interdisciplinary module in psychotherapy/counselling training

Such studies could also be broadened to incorporate a combination of both qualitative and quantitative methods.

## 6.6 Final Thoughts

This study set out to explore the experiences of 'white' Irish clients in encounters with white English therapists/counsellors in England. I was interested in the lived experiences and explanations constructed to make sense of this experiencing. I wanted to understand my own 'white' Irish self-in-relationship. What emerged was a story deeply rooted in a collective history, culture and transgenerational trauma. I was overwhelmed by the depth of loss, shame, anger and grief that was expressed. In the inquiry and workshop, we began to process some of these difficult emotions, but I believe there is still acknowledging, grieving and healing to be done. It was a beginning for both parties.

For me personally and professionally, the reflection continues and I commit myself to attending to my clients' cultures, how they relate to mine, the assumptions I hold about them and the power relations present. I commit myself to listening to the client in ascertaining how *they* conceptualize our cultural relationship. The cultural for me is very personal and cannot be excluded from the therapeutic space. I try to be ever-mindful that each new client is accompanied by many generations of those gone before, just as I am. I don't expect this reflective work to be without difficulty or pain. This is an ongoing process of learning and self-development. The study is only just the start and I am hopeful.

I wish to end this piece with a poem written by Gerry, a second-generation cooperative inquiry co-participant. Gerry sent this gift to me towards the end of our research journey. I believe it speaks for itself:

### BEGINNING

Welcome.

Freedom? Hedonism, boundary breaking kick started the summer of love in 1969.

Where was the good karma informing the authors of the 'No Blacks, No Irish and No Dogs' signage nestling next to the pristine, rigid net curtains?

Who would have provided transport, built the roads, nurtured the sick and cared in many other ways if we had been driven back home?

You ain't Irish you have got an English accent. You are not Irish or English people will say. Good job, I know who I am, unique, a runner who is quick, a Mick and Johnny English.

Slaínte and Good Day!



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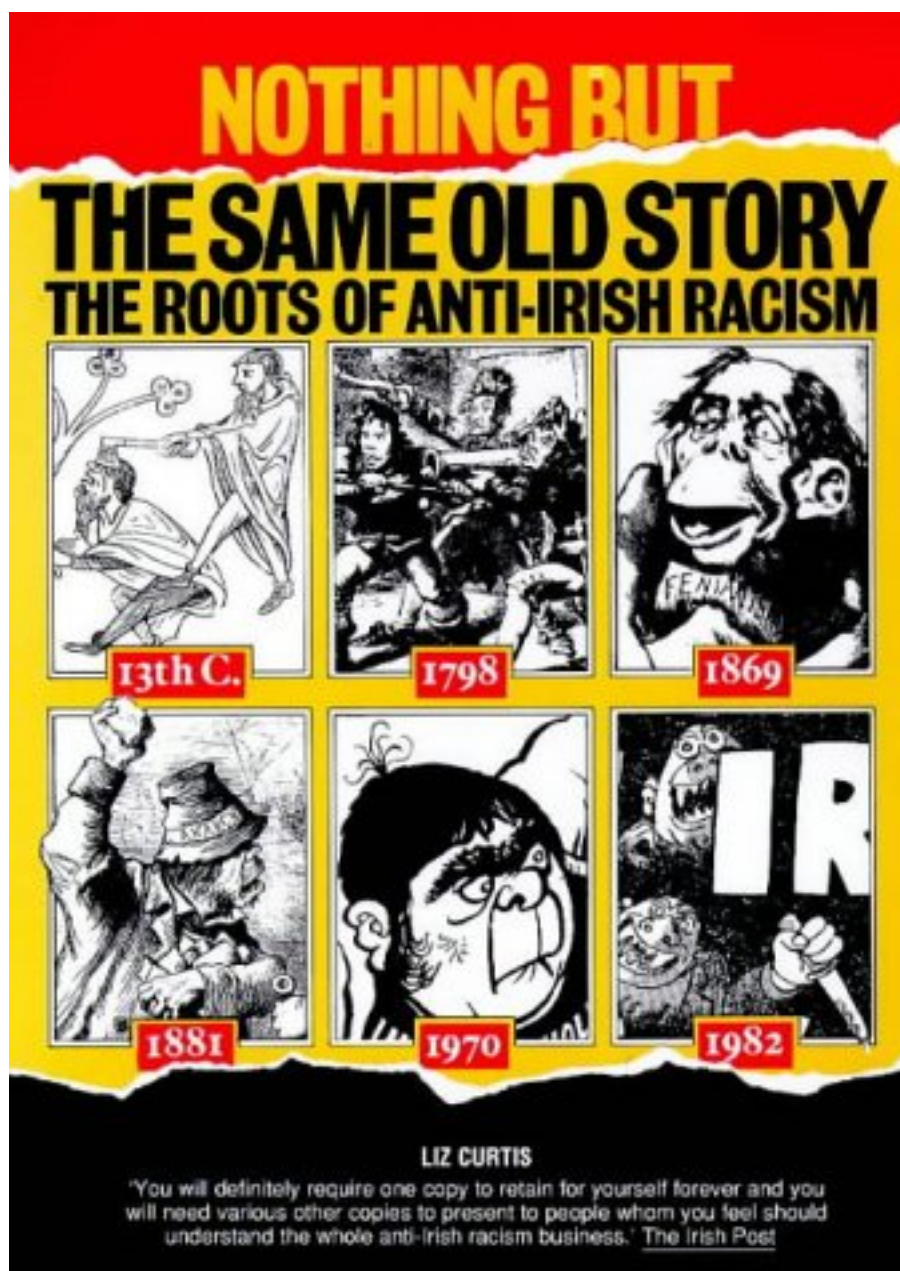
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## **APPENDICES**

1. Cartoons
2. Documentation for Initial Meeting of the Cooperative Inquiry
3. Cooperative Inquiry Input: Example theme for reflection
4. Example hand-out on developing themes
5. Workshop Presentation
6. Example Initial Coding
7. Example of Memoing
8. Example Focused Coding
9. Category Building: Cooperative Inquiry
10. Category Building: Dialogic Workshop
11. Metanoia Research Ethics Committee Approval

## Appendix 1

### Cartoons



Curtis, L. (1984). *Nothing But the Same Old Story: The Roots of Anti-Irish Racism*. London: Information on Ireland

## **Appendix 2**

### **Documentation for Initial Meeting of the Cooperative Inquiry**

## **Possible Agenda**

November 16<sup>th</sup>, 2012

### **First Meeting: Possible Agenda**

- Welcome, personal introductions and a few words from each of us as to what led us to join the group.
- Introduction to the broad topic of inquiry to be considered, with informal discussion, question, possibly leading to modifications to the inquiry topic.
- Introduction to the process of cooperative inquiry, the three strands mentioned above, and whether the proposed inquiry is likely to be Apollonian (structured) or Dionysian (emergent), and informative or transformative.
- Pairs discussion followed by questions, whole group discussion, with an airing of views.

*Refreshment Break.*

- An action – reflection cycle as introduction. Possible actions will be proposed and one of these or an alternative proposed by the group will be carried out.
- Practical discussion: number of cycles, dates, times, venues and other issues.
- General feedback

### Appendix 3

#### Cooperative Input: Example theme for reflection<sup>35</sup>

*'On 2 Feb 2013, at 14:29, ..... wrote:*

*Hi*

*I enjoyed yesterday.*

*I got into ---- after 11pm and was walking to the bus at the station when I saw my neighbour (who lives across the back fence) and her husband who are very liberal type people from the caring professions I believe; who moved down from London some years ago. I have been to Christmas parties at their place and meals too. So they are good neighbours; and I like them and him particularly. They said they were on the way home from listening to a symphony etc. in London.*

*In the light of our discussions last night at -----, the following might be illuminating.*

*They asked me where I had been and I said I had been up to a meeting at my training Institute of Irish counsellors discussing counselling in England and vice versa. The woman then said "well you are all mad"; before noticing me hesitate, checking with myself that I had heard her correctly and she was indeed in my view commenting on the Irish, and on the cusp of suggesting - albeit, as they were neighbours, with an uncondoning sense of humour - that that was a racist statement; before she went on quickly to add, noticing my disbelief, she should add that she has/d a 'B\_\_\_\_\_' (Irish surname) in her forbears.*

*I maintain that scratch the surface.....*

*Need one say more!*

-----

*I am copying this also to the group as I would love to hear what any of you might say about my experience at ---- station innocently making my way home on the first day of Celtic Spring*

*'Dermot'*

---

<sup>35</sup> Permission to use this piece of personal correspondence was attained from my inquiry-participant.

## **Appendix 4**

### **Example Hand-out on developing themes**

#### **Cooperative Inquiry Group**

##### **Session 3**

Identity In UK Context	<b>'judgemental, 'missing experience...variety', 'old-fashioned', 'moralistic' 'religious'</b>
	<b>'Famine' and 'high moral ground': 'if you have nothing you can have pride and you can do things the right way'</b>
	<b>'English therapists holding the Irish Catholic guilt thing' (in conceptualizing the work)</b>
	'people think we have humour, and we're great craic'
	<b>'presenting persona that are friendly and chatty and humourous'</b>
	<b>'Irishness hides a sense of class'</b>
	'There is a general you are...kind of middle class...kind of the dominant group...'
	<b>'on the outside and externally I appeared middle class'</b>
	'I struggle with the English middle class...'
	'There is a general you are... <b>kind of white'</b> ...
	<b>'hidden amongst...the English' ...</b>
	'we look the same' ...
	<b>'they just saw me as being white'.</b>
	<b>'they are worlds apart...yet on the outside there doesn't look as if there is any difference'</b>
	<b>'...this Irishness...there is the sameness and the otherness..'</b>
	<b>'a lot of shame around...keep low profile...keep your nose down...mind your accent...trying to be invisible...conscious you could be ridiculed or victimized' ...</b>
	'keeping below the radar' ...
	<b>'be careful of what you are singing (saying) because the English here they may not like that' ...</b>
	...'not attaching...not wanting to be 'pidgeon-holed'
	'I want to be a little more neutral...I don't want to speak out'
	'chameleon' ...
	<b>'struggle and despair' 'I know who I am ...but there is a question...a confusion' ...</b>
	'neither one nor the other' ...'in-between space'
	<b>'having two identities'</b>



Colonialism	'Alliance with English, when they have an identity beyond their Englishness'...
	Celts...'joining forces'
	<b>'...drawn to people...from countries that have had similar experiences to what I have...'</b>
	Comparing Irish experiencing and 'Jewish' experiencing?
	'being <b>empathic to people who have been discriminated against...</b> '
	'ridiculed'...'laughed at' ... <b>'Irish being thick and stupid'</b> ...'still have a residue of that (in therapy)'
	<b>(I have) 'experienced discrimination as an Irish person'</b>
	(She made) 'some comment <b>about bogs</b> ...it was racist'
	'they tried to give her bad time because of her being Irish'
	'Hard to be Irish here' ...
	<b>... "Irish joke" ... cultural way of reacting, you know, it's just, it's kind of automatically there almost'</b>
	<b>'slight element of putting you in your place before they do anything for you'</b>
	<b>'they make a racist remark and see it as of no significance'</b>
	'racism is still rampant'
	<b>'I didn't feel equipped</b> to deal with comments, jokes...patronising, the stereotypes'
	<b>'it isn't just two human beings in the room...its about millions of people...and hundreds of years of history'</b>
	'I'm loaded with all my generations...'
	<b>'like the British oppression...those kinds of oppressions have been around for ages'</b>
	'all the shit that has gone down'
	<b>'colluding with your' Irish therapist vs 'working hard' with English</b>
	<b>'Presenting personas...(that) people want to see'.</b>

Relationship	<b>'it's the transference...this English therapist I could see him as a colonial oppressor'</b>
	'with my English therapist...I can feel fearful if I come in with that one-down attitude because of where I come from'
	<b>'feel threatened with people I perceive as really English..middle- and upper-middle class'</b>
	'in terms of what she represented for me...there was a lot of anger...I was carrying my past and my history and Ireland's past and history...into this space..'
	<b>'I was carrying all that history...and my past...my inferiority'</b>
	'I was expecting her to have an older, Irish Catholic idea of things...,looking for (her) approval...I was projecting something onto her'
	'it is what is going on in the room...who are we in the room...bringing many many layers of history...'
	<b>'Moral, holy Irish Catholics vs unholy English Protestants'</b>
	'The English don't use your name' ... <b>not 'acknowledging you as a person'</b> ...not 'seeing you'...'not' the "I-Thou" relationship'
	<b>'Using the words of the confessional...shame...guilt...sorrow'</b>
	<b>'We associate different meanings with words...Irish people often say yes when we mean no...not wanting to be "rude" but English might see that as being devious...whereas the English say "no" and Irish see that as very rude'</b>
	'in terms of the language of the others...mainly English and very middle-class...actually...I didn't feel necessarily an affinity with them'
	'discover(ed) the very different ways we use language and the extent to which my language...I speak both Irish and English...has been quite shaped by Irish idiom'
	<b>'the whole thing about difference is based mainly on black and white and I felt strongly about being...standing up...and saying this is what it is like to be Irish'</b>
	'we have a <b>different relationship to space...and our boundaries are different</b> ...boundaries...are wobbly, fluid ... vs ..."rigid" ..."strict"... "reserved" ... "hard-line"
	'body language...presence...in the room'
	<b>'living in a kitchen'...'The Irish Hearth' Irish and therapy?</b> ('political vocation', 'compassion', 'care', 'attentiveness' 'huddled', 'empathic' 'confession' 'warm' 'cosy', 'hugging', 'informal', 'pleasing', 'colluding with', 'intrusiveness', 'suffocation', 'oppressive', 'judgemental', 'high moral ground', 'lacking variety/experience'...'My home...my castle', 'money', 'cold', 'reserved', 'distant', 'isolation', 'formal', 'detached' 'rejecting' 'you are there...I am here', 'non-judgemental', 'variety', 'experience', 'freedom', 'space', 'lower moral ground', 'working hard with').
	'somebody might have kind of issues around sexuality that may be different...if you grew up here'
	'English just don't get me...perhaps I don't get English'
	'all my relationships had been this other way (Ireland) and I found it very restrictive and my sense was that this person just doesn't get me' ... <b>'Having a wall in front of me'</b>
	<b>'cultural difference is...(a) kind of awkwardness and difficulty...because it</b>

Relationship (cont)	<b>is the big elephant in the room'</b>
	<b>'We take guilt and shame on very easily..we wear it like a coat'</b>
	'I didn't see it (Ireland) as abroad because you didn't need a passport...they don't need to pay attention to us the English...if you go across to Calais, you have to have a passport...and this creates a sense of confusion and it has all to do with the colonization.'
	<b>'Mental health stats'...</b> 'in terms of psychiatric system...there is a huge...a disproportionate number of people of Irish heritage...that are in there as long as the Afro-Caribbean group'
	<b>'The Irish-English Thing' ...'not a comfortable topic'...'a minefield' ...'easier to leave it alone'...</b>
	<b>'I want to be a little more neutral...maybe I don't want to speak out...'</b>
	<b>'people don't want to talk about it' (difference)</b>
	<b>'Talking about (our) difference is "challenging"'</b>
	<b>'difficulty for English people to talk about the Irish thing'</b>
	<b>'it's easy to talk about the good stuff...but (it is) "difficult" (to talk about) the "darker" (stuff)'</b>
	'that whole side of our culture...isn't spoken about...and we collude with that'
	emotions not expressed as 'may not have access to all of our emotions because they may not all be acceptable'(music, drink as outlets)
	Famine: 'it is still around for us and we don't talk about it'
	<b>'we don't talk about the Famine here'.</b>
	<b>Famine: 'my feeling was it's, we're not proud of that' ... 'And still not talked about. You know, it's the shame, isn't it, it's the kind of shame that is still...'</b>
	We 'celebrate the Celtic Tiger...but (nobody) wants to think about those years'
	'I would be wondering does she (therapist) have a stereotype view of the Irish'
	'the assumptions could be that we are exactly the same'
	'all the shit that has gone down'
	'judgement, hostility...insecurity' (sensed when something happens)
	'Irishness was not something you went around advertising'
	'after the cease-fire, the relationships between became a little warmer'
	<b>'people over here don't want to talk about the difference...they don't want to discriminate...sensitivity...between the English and Irish...don't want to say the wrong thing...and people want to say...we are all the same...normalizing'</b>
	<b>'lonely...challenging...racist context all of that...but somehow a bit of freedom'</b>

## **Appendix 5**

### **Workshop Presentation**

## We, as Irish clients, were wondering and were curious about and maybe you could share with us:

- What you have experienced or your awareness of Ireland...the history...the culture...the people...have you ever been there?
- What comes up for you when you think of Ireland...north...south?
- What comes up for you when you hear an Irish accent...when you hear an Irish name?
- Wondering whether any issues of difference emerge for you when you think of the Irish?
- Whether you would feel differently working with an Irish male client than with an Irish female client?
- How would you think of the Irish in terms of cultural groupings...ethnicity...majority...minority?
- What comes up for you when you think of work you have done with an Irish client?
- What do you hold in mind when working with an Irish client?
- How would you conceptualize the work? What frames of reference do you work with then?
- How do you feel the Irish client may see you? What assumptions do you think they may hold?
- How you would conceptualize the Irish-English cultural relationship? (from school, media, politics, therapy training, pub...)?

## Living Cultural Trauma

- ‘we’re a whole nation that for me is still recovering from trauma, the trauma of colonisation’
- ‘I think there is an inherited loss...I think I feel loss when I think about my history’
- ‘Like the British oppression...those kinds of oppressions have been around for ages’
- ‘(Like the Jews) we are onto the shame-guilt thing as well’
- ‘(Famine) was an enormously traumatic experience for a nation’
- ‘It will have left its generational and an intergenerational mark’
- ‘(Shame and guilt are) from surviving that (Famine)...For the people who survived’
- ‘We are easy to oppress’

## Surviving Cultural Trauma

- ‘We have a particular kind of resistance to going to the shadowy places that’s particular to our culture’
- ‘There’s a bit of us, I think, kind of immunised against not feeling that pain’
- ‘So used to loss that it’s part of our being, we’ve absorbed so much’
- ‘My feeling is that we’re not proud of that (Famine)...and still not talked about, you know, it’s the shame’
- ‘Irish society had a very intense relationship with the drink and, at the same time, possibly (because of) the survivor guilt from the time of the Famine’
- ‘Everything was hidden in our psyche; it was actually, you didn’t talk about it’
- ‘(Adopt a high moral code and) it will be alright in the next life’
- ‘(Anglicizing) changing your name (from Irish to English) in your own country, it’s the reason why you’ve changed your name in your own country. Because, I think like, my mother was educated in Irish, but my grandmother she never learned Irish at all. I was horrified. She was born at the end of the 1800s and so, I so, though it’s your own country it’s still a totally inherited past, you know, because you wouldn’t have to change your name amongst...Irish people if that was acceptable. So it’s still the colonial past reason’



## Feeling Different in Relationship

- ‘The English...don’t need to take notice of the Irish in their midst...but we have to take notice of the English’
- ‘The colonial piece is the big difference, that there is the persecutor...victim...and maybe something of the other...the victim...in the other’
- ‘There was a lot of anger...I was carrying my past and my history and Ireland’s past and history into this (therapeutic) space’
- ‘The fact that our mother tongue, in theory, is shared with the British. But in fact I don’t think it really is...I think we speak a different language’
- ‘I always identified with the underdog...identified with the colonized’
- ‘In terms of the psychiatric system...there is a huge...a disproportionate number of people of Irish heritage...as long as the Afro-Caribbean group’
- ‘There is a natural affinity to cultures that were...not English’
- ‘They’d (English) got this dichotomy in their minds that we were either clowns or murderers’



## Feeling Different in Relationship

- ‘Hard to be Irish here’
- ‘Nobody will take this guy (Irish expert on TV) seriously because I sort of sensed how English people would view having an Irish accent’
- ‘She felt great shame about her association with being Irish’
- ‘Don’t let them see your rage’
- ‘I thought that they’ll just laugh actually. In a sense of what I said about the guy, about Davos, in a sense it’s really deep, the sense of they’ll (English therapists) come an and just laugh’ (and later) ‘snigger behind our backs, as my mother used to say’
- ‘I feel very sad at the moment actually. This...This is a very sad turn in our journey. Because it’s true, I think this is true. There’s something about this being at the heart of it. The jokes, being laughed at’
- ‘(They see us as) “amadán”...like “eejits”’

## Silencing Cultural Difference in Relationship

- ‘People over here don’t want to talk about the difference...they don’t want to discriminate...sensitivity...between the English and Irish...don’t want to say the wrong thing...and people want to say we are all the same...normalizing’
- ‘Talking about our difference is challenging’
- ‘It’s (colonization) far too close in history years (to talk about)’
- ‘(On not expressing views around difference as fearing) what their perception would be’
- ‘I think it’s not being good enough, it’s not measuring up, it’s being flawed in some ways. It’s being like holding onto the past...if you think difference is shadowy and openly maybe then it’s hard to embrace it, and I suppose the thing is, you know, will the people understand and will they accept it’
- ‘There’s a lot more darkness to us than I’m prepared to show’
- ‘Irishness was not something you went around advertising’
- ‘Some Irish people assimilated stronger than I’d like because I think that means giving up rather than integrating’

## Silencing Cultural Difference in Relationship

- ‘I love showing the funny part of me. So I think that is completely acceptable, whereas I think like the scary, troublesome angry part I don't know if that would be’
- ‘There is a general you are...kind of middle class...kind of the dominant group’
- ‘Actually they didn't see me as any different from them...they just saw me as being white’
- ‘You are hidden as an Irish person...hidden amongst the English’
- ‘Cultural difference is...kind of awkwardness and difficulty...because it is the big elephant in the room’
- ‘Sometimes the problems seem to be more ours, you know, as in that we perceive them to be a problem and we know the history and lots of us, I suppose, want to remember it, whereas I think that is not...I suppose it's maybe they don't see the culture that comes in with us’
- ‘The assumptions could be that we're exactly the same, you know, because we live the same and we work over here, study over here, so yeah that we'd be the same’

Managing  
Cultural  
Difference in  
Relationship:  
Avoiding

Expecting Irish  
Self to be  
Laughed at or  
Not to be Taken  
Seriously

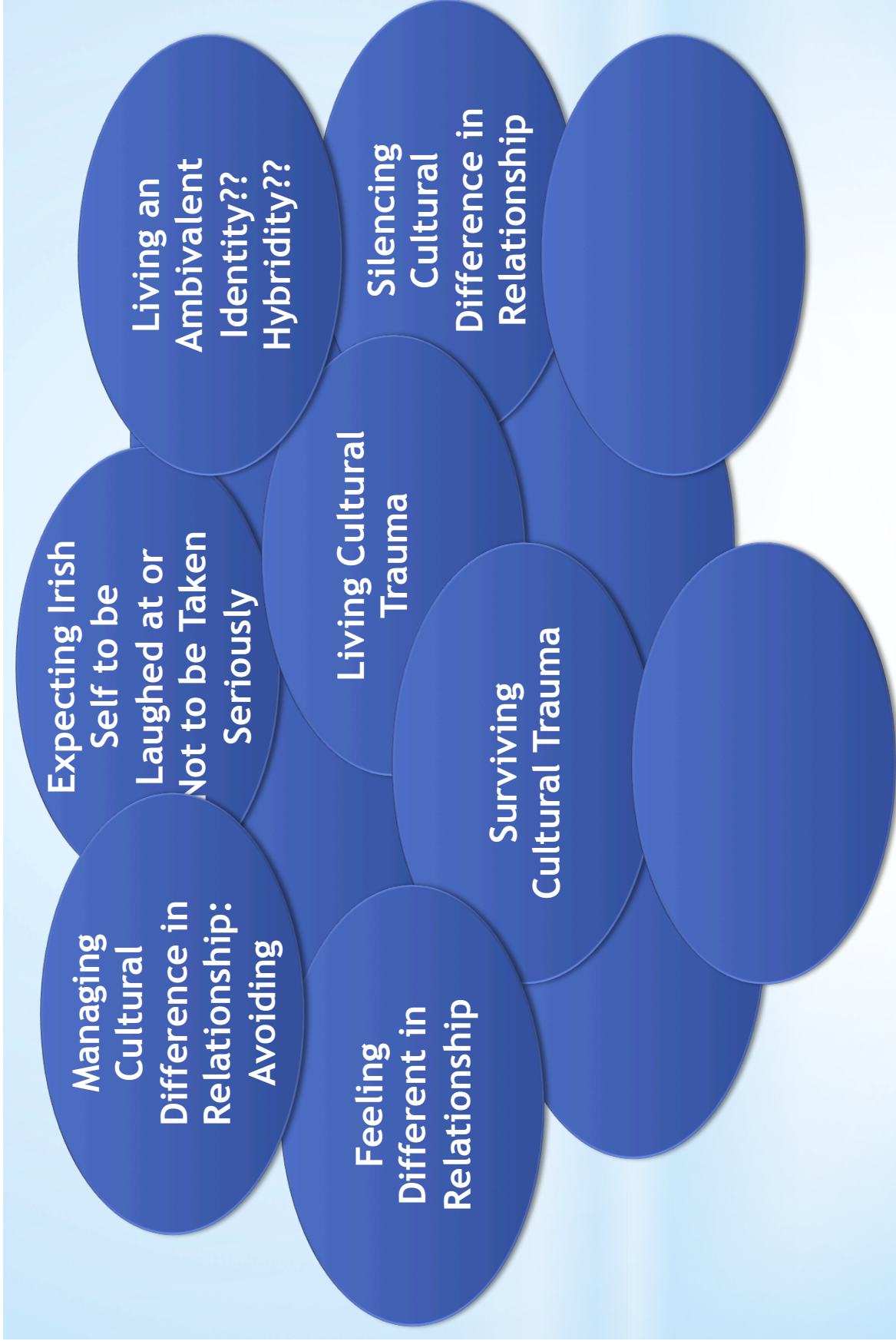
Living an  
Ambivalent  
Identity??  
Hybridity??

Feeling  
Different in  
Relationship

Living Cultural  
Trauma

Surviving  
Cultural Trauma

Silencing  
Cultural  
Difference in  
Relationship





Living the Historical in the Present Relational:  
An internal tension continues undetected behind the  
silence between wanting the Irish Self to be seen and  
wanting to avoid the trauma of the Irish Self being  
seen?????

- ‘it’s the transference...this English therapist I could see him as a colonial oppressor’
- It (historical) has to be acknowledged in the room...because if there is not a dialogue about it in the therapy there is something very important being missed...it’s the transference’
- ‘It was like having a wall in front of me’ (in therapy)
- ‘With my English therapist...I can feel fearful if I come in with that one-down attitude because of where I come from’
- ‘I was carrying all that history...and my past...my inferiority’
- ‘I wonder what they make of me being an Irish woman and if they (English therapists) associate me with being old-fashioned, religious)’
- ‘I’ve got this image that if an Irish person comes into the room they will still have that residue of that (Irish seen as thick and stupid), these days’
- ‘I think you might be watching your parochialisms and your ways of putting things’
- ‘I don’t know which is worse...them thinking us ridiculous or them being scared of us....appearing not to be a threat is probably not a bad move if you’re Irish’

## **Appendix 6**

### **Example Initial Coding**

#### **Excerpt from Cooperative Inquiry**

**Session 2 on December, 14<sup>th</sup>, 2012**

## Excerpt Initial Coding - Session 2/2: Dec 14, 2012

Therese: But I still think there is, I think there is a difficulty for **English people to talk about the Irish thing**. This is kind of a minimal example...but one of the football World Cups and Angola were playing against Portugal and they were saying oh, look how tough it is for people to have to, you know, play against their oppressors, you know. And England were playing against Ireland and nobody was saying anything about it. [Dermot laughs] And I was like, the chap I was going out with at the time was English and I was saying like so why aren't they saying oh, look the Irish they're oppressed, and he was an English guy and **he was saying they wouldn't dare**. You know. **And I think our conversations seem to be one**, it's way too close in history years wise, but in another way ... So I think it's a, it's not a comfortable topic. It's, it's, it's a little bit, ... I suppose my experience would be the **black/white thing** and I'd be very careful **if I was talking to say a black nurse**, I'd be very careful about saying, if she said who came looking for me, I wouldn't say a black person, you know, I would say a tall person or, you know ... So I'd be very mindful of not getting, of, of getting, not getting racial issues wrong.

And so I do think there might be something there about they need to be careful with it because they could so easily get this wrong, or maybe they have to pretend it's all just, oh, we're all white, we're all Western, we're all, you know, so similar so I do think ... I don't know, **that's the feeling tonight...**, I think it's a bit of a **minefield**, and so it might be easier just to leave it alone, you know, just like just to kind of not mention it. So I do think it's, in one way it's hard for, you know, those English people where you're sort of a different culture, I think it's ... It's hard to get that right maybe.

English people having difficulty talking about the Irish thing

Lucy O'Connor 10/1/13 08:42

**Comment [1]:** 'Irish thing' previously used to represent England's colonialism of Ireland

Identifying with the colonized

Being difficult for ex-colony Angola to compete against the ex-colonizer.

English not acknowledging Ireland's difficulty vis-à-vis the English

Not acknowledging the colonial power relations mirrored in the English Irish game

Seeking acknowledgement of the joint colonized past

English not '**daring**' to acknowledge the historical colonial relationship between Ireland and England

Lucy O'Connor 10/1/13 10:07

**Comment [2]:** 'Dare' Fear/Threat = in the room but not mentioned

Colonial history being too recent to acknowledge?

Being uncomfortable to talk about the Irish thing (England's colonial relational past with Ireland as uncomfortable).

Lucy O'Connor 10/1/13 11:02

**Comment [3]:** Again the 'black/white' difference perceived in terms of skin colour..however the origins of the 'black/white' difference in colonial structures?? Internalizing colonizer's belief structures?

Lucy O'Connor 16/1/13 14:37

**Comment [4]:** 'White'?? = White??

Experiencing the Irish/English relationship to parallel the 'black/white' relationship

Being careful not 'mention' the difference?

Avoiding the topic of difference

English needing to be careful when addressing their relationship with Ireland....getting it wrong easily

English pretending that Irish and English are same (White, Western, similar)

Lucy O'Connor 16/1/13 14:41

**Comment [5]:** Feeling in time...context...and later?

Lucy O'Connor 17/1/13 09:46

**Comment [6]:** Minefield...danger...potential destruction...fear...'dare' to tread??

Experiencing the topic of Irish colonization as the minefield

Avoiding talking about difference

Experiencing the Irish as culturally different to English

Assuming English find it difficult to talk about colonial past

## Excerpt Initial Coding - Session 2/2: Dec 14, 2012

Res: It's like there aren't the words there?

Ther: I don't know, I think it's easy to get it wrong. You know, like ... Yeah, I don't know I think it is something that is, people avoid it.

Res: Yeah. Yeah. it feels like something like that?

Therese: (nods)

Ailish: I don't know. I mean, I think yes, there's, there's that possibility but at the same time it's about opening up a dialogue, isn't it. And what I'm thinking about is when I worked at ?? a couple of years ago they had a study day that was called *Racism and Black Issues in Therapy*

*Training*. And I went along to that with, erm, another therapist that was, we were in the same supervision group, and there was a group of twenty people in the room and it was all volunteers, councillors, you know. But we were the only two white people in the group. And the speakers it was all about black issues and the black experience and slavery and the host nation, you know, people coming, people living here and families were from the West Indies, all of that. And you know, that process of just being in a room and feeling uncomfortable was actually really helpful. And I just think, erm, to be sitting there and sort of feeling a real minority, feeling a minority and looking a minority, and they were talking about the black experience and not knowing who they are because their parents are still connected to the West Indies and they're British born and all this kind of stuff ... And we did say it, we did actually

say in the room this feels really uncomfortable because part of us feels we shouldn't be here but at the same time we can identify with some of the stuff.

Joanne: Yeah.

Dermot: It was an interesting learning experience.

Ailish: It was really fascinating because ...

Joanne: What was their response to, what did they, what was their reaction to saying that.

Fear of getting it wrong

Avoiding talking about the difference

Experiencing dialoguing on difference as important

Lucy O'Connor 17/1/13 09:57

**Comment [7]:** From this piece implying that racism only concerns skin colour??

Experiencing self as minority as a white-skinned person

Speaking about black issues, black experience, slavery and the host nation

Feeling uncomfortable as a 'white' person amongst 'black' people

Sitting and feeling as a minority as a 'white' skinned person

Being perceived as white skinned (= colonizer)

Talking about the black experience

Lucy O'Connor 17/1/13 10:05

**Comment [8]:** Looking a minority...white? Internalizing the 'white guilt'...'shame'...privileges?

Not knowing who one is as the 2<sup>nd</sup> generation immigrants

1<sup>st</sup> generation remaining connected to country of origin

Lucy O'Connor 17/1/13 10:08

**Comment [9]:** Missing?? Both colonized...both immigrants to ex-colonizer's country....experiencing similar feelings as immigrants? Where was that dialogue...??

Expressing discomfort as white-skinned person (guilt..shame..whose? Identifying with the colonizer?)

Feeling ambivalent...(not white..and not black)?

Feeling different but also the same

Inquiring into reaction to voicing feelings of belonging/not belonging



## Excerpt Initial Coding - Session 2/2: Dec 14, 2012

[interruption as something is brought in, someone apologises for interruption]

Joanne: That's okay. But yeah, I wonder what it felt like for them the fact that you were there and voicing how you were feeling.

Ailish: They acknowledged it but it was very much in terms of like we are a group of Irish people talking about our Irishness, and they were a group of black and Asian people talking about their black and Asian experience. And we were in the group but it was acknowledged but I don't know, they didn't really engage with our stuff because it was all about their stuff, which is probably what it could be like if we have English therapists here, you know.

Joanne: Except that we'll be very interested in their well, in their stuff, in, relative to Irishness.

Ailish: Yeah, yeah.

Joanne: So yeah.

Ailish: It would be interesting though.

Joanne: It would be very interesting because I think of many questions that we're raising.

Tom: Yes, I think it would be worth giving it a twirl.

Joanne: Yeah.

Res: We can try it then here. That's great. It's just that otherwise it might be just a wall.

Tom: Yeah.

Res: A wall, like you were saying, Ailish...Joanne.. great to have you.

Joanne: Yes. And I'm sure I have a date in my diary, probably, haven't I?

Res: Yes.

Joanne: And I hope the next time I won't be racing off.

Inquiring into reactions to voicing feelings

Lucy O'Connor 17/1/13 11:18

**Comment [10]:** Suggesting that Joanne has never discussed such themes with other minority groups?? do I sense some worry around other's reaction...fear of offending or of an unpleasant reaction...maybe rejection?

Being acknowledged but not?

Lacking dialogue between minority groups

Not engaging with Irish 'stuff' (not talking)

Being all about black and Asian issues?

Fear of English therapists not engaging with Irish 'stuff' (Missing dialogue: not only English but other minority groups...)

Being interested in English 'stuff' regarding Irish..again reaction

Lucy O'Connor 17/1/13 11:54

**Comment [11]:** (assumptions...experiences beliefs?)

Being interested in hearing 'English' therapist's reaction to our findings

Inquiry raising question (for whom? wanting answers?)

Expressing openness to dialogue

Lucy O'Connor 17/1/13 13:06

**Comment [12]:** The wall between (from last session)..perhaps a chart of emerging themes next week?

Being uncertain....unsure....needing confirmation

Lucy O'Connor 17/1/13 13:11

**Comment [13]:** (from the prospect of dialogue too)

Racing off

## Excerpt Initial Coding - Session 2/2: Dec 14, 2012

[says her goodbyes and leaves room]

Res: Yeah. But that dialogue, yeah, it seems to be missing in there with the Irish English. And also the history, isn't it, the politics, it's not really settled in a sense...

Dermot: I remember when I had my 60<sup>th</sup> birthday and my brother wasn't well enough to come to it, so I took a video of my parents and I asked my dad if he could sing to my mum. I asked him to sing *Galway Bay* actually. Which wasn't one of his favourite songs. We had a great big, it's called the .... Café in the park in ...., so it's round, and it was put upon the ceiling, so about 150 people there looking up at this 90-year old man singing, holding the hand of his wife, and singing *Galway Bay*. But the thing is that he said, and I never knew this before, he said I can't, some of those verses wouldn't be appropriate. I didn't know the third or fourth verse apparently are about colonialism, I didn't know that. Did you know that?(turning to tom)

Tom: No...I didn't really know that, no.

Dermot: And he said he was, he was, and this was only just recently and he was like you've got to be careful because of what you're singing because there will be English people here they might not like that. [laughs] I thought that was really interesting actually. He was very alert to that.

Res: Yeah. So he learned not offending or not to be pushing.

Ailish: But it's not about pleasing, is it.

Dermot: No, it's not, no.

Ailish: It's not about pleasing, it's about tolerating somebody not liking you, and then having to tolerate the, our experience too. So I just think well, there's something about that's it's not about people pleasing which I think the Irish they do a lot.

Lucy O'Connor 17/1/13 16:00

**Comment [14]:** Going back to previous emerging themes..Timing? but ignored as Dermot continues

Including

Connecting with Ireland

Looking up to his father

Reemerging memories

Reconnecting through song (also Ireland??)

Lucy O'Connor 17/1/13 17:18

**Comment [15]:** Such emotion in Dermot's voice...

Keeping hidden....suppressing?

Keeping from his son (to protect?)

Avoiding talking about colonial relationship

Not knowing previously

Recently recounting...(not for 60 years)

Being careful with the English counterparts (of what you sing say, express emotionally?)

Not wanting to offend or upset the English?

Being alert (vigilant) vis a vis English

Relating / Dialoguing not to do with pleasing the English

Lucy O'Connor 17/1/13 17:25

**Comment [16]:** Ailish defiant...

Tolerating the Other's dislike/displeasure (Fear of being disliked..and retaliation?) = avoid)

Tolerating the experience of being disliked by the Other

Dialoguing not to do with pleasing the English

Pleasing the English a lot...

## Excerpt Initial Coding - Session 2/2: Dec 14, 2012

Dermot: They do do that a lot, don't they

Ailish: Yeah. My father had a song for every occasion. He would sing *The Lambeth Walk* when he was here. My wedding was in London.

Res: Yeah.

Ailish: And we had a Jewish couple at our wedding, English, Irish. My father had a song for everybody. [laughs]

Res: That must have been brilliant.

Dermot: Good for him.

Ailish: He was wonderful.: ... But the English people there actually loved listening to my dad sing the ballads. You know, actually loved him singing the *The Wild Colonial Boy* you know, all these, Kevin Barry, all those, it's just, you know ...

Dermot...lovely: Hmm.

Ailish: But in a way it is about opening up a dialogue because we have got something important to say about our history.

Res: Yeah. And it's a joint history, that's the thing, it's so connected.

Dermot: And I think in *This Week* about London actually is quite interesting is that it wasn't black people it was like the majority of people now in London weren't born in England, about 52% of Londoners aren't. It's incredible, isn't it.

Res: It is.

Dermot: A lot of those are Irish.

Res: Yeah. It's huge.

Ailish: I don't know if you know but there is an Irish counselling forum.

Res: Yeah, yeah, there is yeah.

Tom: There is, yes. I'm a member of it.

Pleasing the English a lot

Lucy O'Connor 17/1/13 18:12

**Comment [17]:** Importance of song as a processing mechanism comes up over and over again....

Using music in every occasion

Reconnecting through song

Identifying with Jews

Connecting with every cultural group through song

Expressing deep wonderment of father

English enjoying the rebel ballads

Loving the *The Wild Colonial boy* and Kevin Barry

Reconnecting emotionally through story...sharing

Opening up a dialogue important

Having something important to say about our history

52% of Londoners being born abroad

Lucy O'Connor 17/1/13 18:15

**Comment [18]:** Irish have been the biggest minority group!!!

'Black-skinned' minority groups no longer the biggest minority

Irish making up a large part of Londoners born abroad

Irish counselling forum

Being a member

## Excerpt Initial Coding - Session 2/2: Dec 14, 2012

Ailish: Sorry.

Tom: I'm a member of it.

Res: Yeah, yeah. That's how you heard about this, Tom, isn't it?

Tom: I think so, yeah.

Res: Yeah, yeah, yeah. Yeah.

Ailish: Because I remember reading an article in the BACP journal a few years ago about it.

Res: Yes, that's right.

Ailish: And erm, which I found interesting and at the same time I also felt a little bit resistant to it because I actually thought I don't really want to attach myself to ...

Tom: Yes.

Res: To?

Ailish: Do you know what I mean, to ... I suppose in a way I lived in London 30 years, I've never felt drawn to Irish clubs or, you know, so I've got Irish friends but it was partly, there was something about not wanting to define myself purely as being Irish, you know. So it's ... And erm, and I felt ...

Dermot: You didn't want to pigeonhole yourself.

Ailish: Yeah. And reading the article from the Irish ...

Res: Was that about Ireland or somewhere where a place my head, not my head but something about home is where my chair is or couch is. Home is where my couch is, that was it. I think, was that the one, Ailish, that you were thinking about coming here and settling in there and then finding this community.

Ailish: There was part of it really made, part of that made sense. Another part I felt personally I didn't really appeal to me, I suppose.

Being a member (ingroup/outgroup)

Introducing an article

Being a member of the BACP

Finding interesting

Feeling resistant to something

Being ambivalent

Not wanting to attach oneself (to Irishness...to Irish community..to Irish counselling community?)

Never feeling drawn to Irish clubs

Having Irish friends

Not wanting to define oneself (identify oneself) as being Irish

Not wanting to be pigeonholed as Irish

Lucy O'Connor 17/1/13 17:41

**Comment [19]:** Not wanting to be pigeonholed (Dermot; Joanne, Ailish)...avoid being identified as Irish???What does it mean to be Irish....?

Not wanting to be pigeonholed as Irish

Lucy O'Connor 21/1/13 17:42

**Comment [20]:** ??? leave co-participants to explain...voice their own thoughts

Lucy O'Connor 17/1/13 17:45

**Comment [21]:** Making sense....and being appealing...cognitions and emotions?

Part of the article making sense

Part of the article not appealing (ambivalence)

## Excerpt Initial Coding - Session 2/2: Dec 14, 2012

Tom: I've only gone to one meeting and what struck me at that time that quite a number of the group were from a psycho-analytic or psycho-dynamic, a strongly psycho-dynamic background, but because I'm so far away, you know, to come down to London on a Saturday morning wasn't easy. I'm now with a niece in London so it's a bit easier to travel, so they may see me the odd time. But my own, at that time I suppose I was very firmly in the person-centred tradition so I was **sectarian** in my own way, you know.

Res: Yeah.

Tom: You know, I do know that many of those people who are in the group who I've come across their training seems to be fairly strongly psycho-dynamic.

Ailish: That's right. And I think that's one thing that put me off too with ... because my background is person-centred and there was a feeling, I don't know whether I was looking to work with them or I might have applied, **but feeling like I wasn't acceptable because of my background**, because of my therapeutic background. So there was, I don't know whether that's my issues, but there was something about being marginalised by people and part of me was thinking well, I have so much to offer. But because I haven't got this therapeutic training I don't even get past sending an application.

Tom: Yes.

Res: Yeah, yeah.

Ailish: Pigeonholed.

Therese: But there is something there, isn't there, about, we were talking last time about **another whole class thing** here and maybe we're coming up against like middle class English that you don't measure up. But there is something about coming up against Irish or that maybe if, maybe it **kind of presses other buttons but you have to measure up**

Being from a psycho/analytic or psycho-dynamic background

Being far away

Coming to London being difficult

Having an Irish relative making it easier (Base, Grounding, Irish)

Being firmly person-centred

Being sectarian

Lucy O'Connor 17/1/13 17:48

**Comment [22]:** Divide...them us...Catholic/Protestant...

Being uneasy as a person-centred therapist with psychodynamically trained therapist/counsellor

Being put off by the Other....

Identifying allegiance..

Feeling rejected because of minority background (by own!...multiple identities)

Reflecting

Feeling marginalized

Not being recognized as of value

Not being considered (acknowledged)

Lucy O'Connor 17/1/13 18:16

**Comment [23]:** Parallel processing!!!!???

Being Pigeon-holed

Introducing the class theme

Coming up against middle class English

Not measuring up

Lucy O'Connor 17/1/13 17:52

**Comment [24]:** Middle-class vs Working class...disidentifying..identifying..

Lucy O'Connor 17/1/13 18:19

**Comment [25]:** Transference? Parallel Processes? Not measuring up....to the Other...being inferior

Pressing other buttons

Having to measure up (how?)

## Excerpt Initial Coding - Session 2/2: Dec 14, 2012

to that too. You know, so, so you're applying to this Irish counsellor association or whatever, but you do have to, there's a thing you have to, a bar there too. Like I don't know exactly what it is but there's definitely a bar there as well, I think. And when I said because you know, like I feel very Irish, even though I think probably in the last several years I think I've become a little bit more of a chameleon, you know, I think I fit in more if you like, but I do feel very Irish so I think when I'm saying punitive Catholi-, I still, it's great to be able to talk about it and it's, it feels, it's lovely to remember all the layers and I think all the ... Because I do think we're affected by many generations that went before us, so I think that's, you know, like I think that's hugely important. But for me I think with the Irish it's that the, I say punitive, I love the word punitive, I think my family are ... There are lots of other things too which have more positive connotations but they're punitive. And I ...

Res: It's kind of a cleansing word, punitive, too.

Therese: Yeah, absolutely, I think so too, but I think with the Irish for me it's a moralistic, moral high ground people, you know, and I am one of them too, one of us...however But and, but that's where I think, like I think ... So it's slightly for me a different bar but it's ...

Res: Yeah, there's a bar.

Therese: Yeah, absolutely.

Res: And it feels like a struggle as well, kind of constant.

Therese: I think for me it's this big moral thing. And I think our grandmother lived with us until I was fifteen, she was my maternal grandmother, so she brought up the kids, if you like, and I do think she was very good and grew up in very hard times and they were farmers and like her father remembers the famine and you know, and people coming in, they had land and they had a pig trough and people who'd be walking the road used to come in and take the food that the pigs were getting, you know, so like there is all this kind of history, there were ... But Jesus, such a

Applying to an Irish association

A non-definable bar existing...(Irishness, within Irishness?)

Feeling very Irish

Becoming more of a chameleon

Feeling ambivalent

Fitting in more

Feeling very Irish

Reintroducing the 'punitive Catholicism' theme

Lucy O'Connor 17/1/13 18:26

**Comment [26]:** From intrapsychic to contextual?

Experiencing dialogue as enriching

Enjoying

Acknowledging the layers in the interactional process

Being affected by many past generations

Experiencing the transgenerational 'layer' as important to process

Experiencing Irish family as punitive

Loving the word punitive

Family being punitive

Irish being moralistic (moral high ground)

Being part of the moralistic group

Being moralistic

Acknowledging the multiple dimensions of relating

Setting standards being a big moral issue

Reconnecting with past generations

**Making sense by incorporating the cultural/historical**

Growing up in hard time

Recalling the Famine..Processing??

Eating from the pig trough

Lucy O'Connor 17/1/13 18:38

**Comment [27]:** I feel myself holding my breath...It is a powerful image...I could hear a pin drop in the room. We were connecting with the past...something very deep and painful....

Dynamics emerging from history...culture...making sense by drawing on the historical..

## Excerpt Initial Coding - Session 2/2: Dec 14, 2012

moral code for life, and there is so much shoulds and shouldn'ts. So I think that's a thing that an English therapist may not realise how loaded somebody like, like obviously I've had years of navel gazing, so it's different but, but I don't think they would realise how loaded and I do think it's a general, I'm loaded with all my generations, you know. And I just, you couldn't possibly know that if you didn't come from that, I think.

Res: Yeah. It is like what you were saying, Therese, is that the shoulds and shouldn'ts come from that survival, you know, there were people actually dying and there was kind of the moral code was nearly a survival thing, maybe at some stage in our history?

Therese: Yeah, I don't know if the two are ... For me that comes like some kind of either religious thing or maybe if you have nothing you have pride and you can do things the right way. I don't know exactly where it comes from but I feel very affected by it. I think that it's a very kind of real thing.

Res: Sounds deep, yeah, yeah, yeah.

Therese: Yeah, yeah.

[pause]

Res: And just again when you're sitting with an English therapist it's like they're so connected with that history as well, even though they're not aware of that what's in the room because I mean, it's not taught, there's no knowledge of that in a sense, like you were saying the last time as well, Ailish. And that was my experience as well. People don't know about this stuff.

Therese: Yeah.

Ailish: Hmm.

[pause]

Moral code emerging from transgenerational history  
Internalizing the moral codes for life (and transmitting?)  
Holding the moral codes  
English therapist not knowing  
Irish client being loaded  
English therapist not realizing how loaded a client is  
Being loaded with "all my generations"  
Not knowing because not experiencing

Reflecting on origins of 'Loads' of moral codes/belief systems..religion?  
Having nothing  
Having pride  
Feeling effected by transgenerational transmitted belief systems  
Being a very real thing

## **Appendix 7**

### **Example Memoing Process from Comment to Memo**



## Initial Coding Session 1

Raw Data	Initial Code
Brid: I am from ..... Moved over here in 96 with my husband and daughter. She was 7. She is 24 now and she moved back to ... and I find, watching her grow up and seeing her very much as a <b>hybrid creature</b> of the two places quite interesting. hmm. I worked with a British therapist when I started working first. It was a tough old grind 4 years with this woman. It was a very kind of. We worked in the <b>shadowy places</b> I think a lot of the time. She was a bit of a bitch frankly, even aside from being a therapist or English or anything and as I reflect on it, I don't know how much my ethnicity or nationality had to bear there. I do know she did get a kick out of making me feel uncomfortable talking about sex, that she, you know. I did I think, just talking and exploring these things with me. I think ultimately it was kind of useful. I worked with another British therapist after that but she was from Edinburgh so we had the Celtic kind of connection.	Moving over Returning Passing time/Growing up Being a Hybrid= 'creature of 2 places' Working with a British/English therapist Therapy being difficult Working in 'Shadowy' places Therapist being a 'bitch' Reflecting from a broader perspective incorporating culture Therapist being perceived as punitive/masochistic Feeling uncomfortable Dialoguing on difficult themes Dialoguing being useful Working with a Scottish therapist Connecting as celtic
R...was that a different sense...with her... B. Oh yeah...we kind of shared. We kind of shared an outsider view kind of thing. Hmm. and I get what you (nod to Tom) are saying working with clients, being Irish in general, helps alliances, who would also identify themselves as other from other ethnic groups or might allow English who have, who might identify themselves from a sexual minority or have another identity beyond their Englishness that comes up in the work that there can be an alliance around <b>we, the others, also significant</b> . I think is how we as Irish people what a relatively recent history we have with counselling and psychotherapy but I believe that is probably more relevant back there than it is here. hmm. and I take what you (Tom) say as well that we speak English differently and we associate different meanings with words and somebody very eloquently said something along the way that Irish people often say yes when we mean no. That is because we do not want to be rude but the English might see it as being <b>devious</b> .	Sharing cultural background Connecting as cultural outsiders Being Irish facilitating work with other 'outsiders' Identifying with members of other ethnic groups Identifying self as a minority Bonding with an identity beyond English Forming a bond based on 'otherness' Having little experience of therapy Comparing Irish and English contexts Agreeing Differing culture Using the same language differently Communicating indirectly Not wanting to be rude Being perceived by the English as rude /Being misunderstood

## Memo: December 4<sup>th</sup>, 2012: Transgenerational trauma – “The long shadow”???

*Silence, silence. The story is done.  
He stands in the doorway of his house  
A ragged sculpture of the wind,  
October cracks the rotted mattress,  
The bedposts fall. No hope. No lust.  
The hungry fiend  
Screams the apocalypse of clay  
In every corner of this land.*

Patrick Kavanagh: ‘The Great Hunger’ (1942)

Along with our silence, there is also that lurking darkness, as a colleague of mine describes, and much of our process seems to be at the edge of the shadows, of a darkness. What are we doing with these shadowy places in therapy? Are we hiding from this darkness? Can we trust ourselves to go there? Are we strong enough to look at that in ourselves and in its form in the relationship under study? Gerry (S1) speaks of despair and frustration in dealing with his intrapsychic conflict...this intrapsychic wounding? ‘Confusion’, ‘frustration’ and ‘anger’, ‘rejection’, ‘fear’, ‘threat’, ‘humiliation’, ‘shame’, ‘hunger’ are emotions that are used to express experiences in the interpersonal world which could be understood as emerging from the Irish-English historical

relationship...the Irish-English difference. We are 'digging' to use Tom's word...digging into darker places...digging into graves? Nothing remains in the shadows? Nothing remains hidden?

In talking about the historical, intergenerational dimension to the relationship, Gerry (S1) struggles to find words to explain, contain, hold the felt senses...hold the enormity of the experience...of all that time, nonlinear time, present with the dyad in the therapeutic space...'I am losing the words now'...'it is that what is going on in the room...who are we in the room...bringing many ,many layers of history'. I save him...I couldn't bear the pain I think in retrospect. He smiles at me with relief...comments quietly...'it (our history) fills books...'. There are numerous examples of us grappling to find the words, to voice the implicit...these shadows are dark...'hard to explain' and 'difficult to capture' (Dermot S1)... 'subtle' (ThereseS1) (almost out of awareness)...'hard to nail down...I can feel it'(Bríd S1). There is fear there. Have we words for these shadows?

There is a sense of history repeating itself in the present. Bríd had observed that in recent years the Irish have again started coming over to Britain due to economic necessity and are clumping together with others who are 'similarly afflicted...affected...whatever' as a defence 'against attack'?..she asks later. A fear, a threat, as sense of strength in numbers...are we hiding from others or from ourselves? Dermot (S1) experiences his English therapists as not 'getting' or understanding him and wonders aloud whether he gets English people. He speaks of 'fusing' with Irish people and how he enjoyed it in the 1950s and 1960s but now has a sense of being 'hidden...as an Irish person', hidden 'amongst the English' where he is now living outside London. He explains this in terms of there being fewer Irish people to associate with. I get a sense that he feels isolated and alone...out there...part of him hidden away with these shadows ...disconnected?

There is also this sense of loss in the shadows, which speaks from the data...a loss of community, acknowledgement, home, family, recognition and respect, but there is also shame? It is a loss that often is associated with emigration, and 2 million people were forced to emigrate during the two decades of the Famine. In Dermot's (S1) recounting of his trip back to his father's homeplace, I was moved by his experiencing, his reconnecting with his family's roots, his father, his family and his delight in being acknowledged as the son of his Irish father, even after 90 years of exile. He, his father and his family had been kept in mind even after emigration and loss of homeland and community. Dermot (S1) comments that such a sense of community would not be found in England. I wondered if there was in his words his father's grieving his loss and his father's longing to belong again? If he is hiding his Irishness amongst the English...is it also this whole cultural piece is being hidden from his English therapist?

Bríd (S1) also reflected on a talk she had been to in the previous week on Jewish stereotypes, and it struck her as we spoke how shame and guilt play such a big role in the Jewish psyche too. She reflects on how both Jews and Irish have internalized the inevitability of being 'tarnished with the inferior brush'. She recognizes the processes, however, as different in the sense that the Jew talked about the Holocaust, but the Irish do not talk about the Famine... 'no it is kinda like we had that coming sort of' ... but then we lost the battle and never won the war...there is shame in the shadows and shame often leads to an avoidance...a hiding?

This theme of Famine emerged as if it burst out of the process, as if everything was just a build-up to the effect that trauma has had on the Irish psyche...a trauma that just cannot be talked about in England... As J (S1) describes... 'we don't talk about the Famine here...we just don't talk about it.' There was a heavy feeling as we spoke about the Famine 'here'...we pulled the words out...felt the trauma weighing on the group. Tom (S1) began to speak of his brothers 'digging' around how 'we' (his family) survived the Famine...and that it took 'him quite a while to come to terms of what had happened...there is a lot of stuff'. Each time I come across his piece here, the image of 'digging' opens up for me...but it is a digging of graves and I am overcome with sadness...lying so heavy on my shoulders and chest. I hope that I can keep working at this...As I write my arms feel like lead...these shadows are heavy and perhaps wish to remain hidden?

A thought has come to me as I reflect... The ease with which the Irish wear a coat of guilt and shame was also flagged...again using the example of the Indian lady who was denied an abortion in Ireland... (December 6). Guilt: Levels of guilt? We speak in our piece about guilt and assume it has all to do with Catholic guilt...sin...confessional...sin...guilt. However, if we are to broaden the treatise and incorporate a transgenerational perspective, guilt takes on a more nuanced form in the Irish psyche. There exists a survival guilt (both in terms of life and place)... (between 1 to 1.5 million dead and over 1 million emigrated during the period from 1845 to 1852). There is the guilt of 'letting go' of our language and culture. There is the guilt of 'letting ourselves be oppressed' (as Tom calls it ... 'dying to be oppressed'). There is also what I would term the 'Michael Collins' guilt...(if we had had been clever enough, educated enough, as good as the English we would have negotiated our independence better with the English and not have had the 'wool pulled over our eyes').

**Note to self:** how does this trauma play out in the therapy room, given that the English also played a part in the Famine and in the loss and in those hidden shadows. The Famine, which many politicians in England saw as an austerity measure at the time, as producing "*permanent good out of transient evil*" (Charles Trevelyan, chief Famine administrator and lord of the files). What would we project from this transgenerational trauma into the room...object relations...transgenerational scripts. What blame do we project? Do we silently search for an

acknowledgement of guilt...a begging for forgiveness? Maybe that is what I am looking for? Do I need to get rid of these shadows?

**Note to self:** Include here object relations piece (Klein), transgenerational scripts (Berne) and relational trauma (DeYoung, Mitchell, Aron). Frantz Fanon...negative affects of the oppressors are 'deposited into the bones' of the oppressed (197, p. xviii-xix)...Colonized body

**Note:** *The presence of transgenerational trauma and psychic wounds is palpable (along with carrying Irish Catholic issues around shame/guilt, sorrow)...and also links back to food issues re: Irish Famine – There is awareness of how past generations emigrated to England and how they experienced loss while fleeing shame, only to face hardship, racism, and loneliness...and hiding in shadows interpersonally. Participants are aware that they carry a whole history including one of being deferential, subservient, people-pleasing, etc., but it is not talked about...the words are missing or are we hiding? There is much in the transcript that refers back to this lurking darkness...the shadows in the relationship. An English therapist in this context might then be seen as the oppressor, but this is hidden from them in the shadows that have not yet been named? – it's not just two people in the room, it's millions living in the shadows or hiding in the shadows?*

## **Appendix 8**

### **Example Focused Coding**

#### **Excerpt from Cooperative Inquiry**

**Excerpt from session 3 on February, 1st, 2013**

## Excerpt Focused Coding: Session 3/1 Feb 1, 2013

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DERMOT: That's right, writes about that. But anyway they decided to interview somebody who was in, I don't know whether you've read about this, all these economic people from all over the world are going to go to Davos in Switzerland, and they interviewed this guy to give his view and he came on with an Irish accent. And actually I was just thinking as I was talking to you, I immediately felt nobody will take this person seriously.

F: Yeah.

DERMOT: I mean, that's quite strong, isn't it. [several agree]

RES: Yeah, yeah.

DERMOT: Nobody will take this guy seriously because I sort of sensed how English people would view having an Irish accent.

BRID: And I notice how many Irish people are in those kind of a person who's going to talk about the brain is, Maureen is .. Or it is, John ... There is a lot of that. [laughter]

DERMOT: I felt sort of embarrassed, I felt sort of, I knew he would be the one who would be able to talk more sense but I felt the English people would take no notice of him. And that's quite deep, isn't it. For it to be just like that.

RES: It's like that automatic, you know, last time we were talking about that, last time that automatic we have the automatically almost they're having a laugh, or there's something automatic that comes up when an Irish accent is heard or you know. And then, you know, when I think of your parents, you've got English accents but your parents have got an Irish accent and you have that Irish in you, I mean, you know ... And just, you know, that was on the first page I've done. I

Experiencing shame vis-à-vis Irishness: (Feeling embarrassed seeing and Irish expert with an Irish accent on the TV)

Lucy O'Connor 2/3/13 13:45

**Comment [1]:** Shame and comfort (grandmother's voice soothed Dermot)...ambivalence

Experiencing shame vis-a- vis Irishness: Feeling very strongly?

Assuming English Other will not take the Irish seriously

Being missed

Constructing English relational other: Feeling English people would not take notice of the Irish expert due to Irish accent

Being experts (surprise... unacknowledged?)

Being missed

Experiencing shame vis a vis Irishness: Feeling shame very deeply

Assuming English Other will not take the Irish seriously

Being missed

Being shamed

## Excerpt Focused Coding: Session 3/1: Feb 1, 2013

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hope you don't mind me saying that this is, the confusion with the two identities, you know, you have ... Dermot as well and that's sitting in the therapy as well. And then there's, there might be the English therapist opposite, you know, what's in there, and just thinking of that as well. You know, and that comes up with an Irish accent the English won't take that person seriously.

DERMOT: And I know when my parents used to visit me and friends used to come round, that used to be in the back of my mind, I wonder will they take them seriously. So it's very deep this stuff actually. It just sort of came to me.

RES: It's very sad, it makes me very sad when I think about it actually, yeah.

GERRY: And something that comes in mind for me is my dad still got a bit of a stronger accent probably than my mum and people ... To me, you know, I don't, that's my dad, he speaks, his voice is clear to me, I don't, I 'm used to it. But for some people it's, I think they find it harder to understand him because he's got a strong accent. So relative to their experience of other people yes, he has got. I suppose it's what comes to mind and how much effort are people putting into their listening and it's, you know, when there is a different accent, different experience to how someone is talking to thame, so that would be relevant in terms of sitting in a room with a client.

BRID: I think the English feed their own disrespect as well if you're from North of Birmingham, the down in the South they say all these awful things about people from the North of this country, you know. Talk about how impenetrable their accents are. [GERRY agrees] In fact when you were talking a moment ago about the Tory party and the fact that so many people are not represented by this party, I think there's something really poignant about how English people are blind to this fact. That they don't see that their prime ministers have either been Oxford or Cambridge educated, that they were all mates in the school, you know, that this is so not a meritocratic place, you know, that there is something about they're needing the royalty and all of that that they feel they are being well served. Okay,

Experiencing shame vis-à-vis Irishness: Expecting English friends not to take Irish parents seriously

Experiencing shame vis-à-vis Irish parents

Experiencing shame vis-à-vis Irishness: Feeling shame very deeply

Being missed

Experiencing shame vis-à-vis Irish parents' accent

Being missed

Being shamed

*(Process: Becoming aware on reflection)*

Not listening to the Irish accent

Being missed

Lucy O'Connor 2/3/13 14:03

**Comment [2]:** Not being listened to enough... pity for father.... feeling unacknowledged... not taken seriously

*(Process: Other perspective)*

Oppressing political structures: assuming real

Oppressing political structures: English needing hierarchical structures

Lucy O'Connor 2/3/13 14:07

**Comment [3]:** Colonial structures... royalty.... superiority.... being subservient also assuming real... 'blind to'

Assuming

## Excerpt Focused Coding: Session 3/1: Feb 1, 2013

we're hardly kind of taking the streets in our droves in Ireland either, and look at how well served we are there. But there is some kind of belief that what they have, the little that they have, the very working class people that it's enough. And I work in the EAP, in an employer assistance programme, and I meet a lot of so-called working class say guys working for BT who are engineers or something who thought they'd lose a leg before they'd ever come into counselling or therapy, and that can be, most of the work can be around making that an okay experience with this guy, the kind of maybe left school early, not educated English person. I wonder if sometimes the going to a therapist for such a person, let's imagine a BT engineer, it's probably not going to be an awful lot more comfortable for him than it would be for us. That there is a ... I think of what we're dealing with is something more complex of course. But I'm ... Like I sometimes wonder what would happen if working class English people suddenly woke up and went thought hang on a minute, do you know. Even the way they deal with their soldiers and stuff, paying them almost nothing, you know, I never thought I'd see the day that I'd be defending British soldiers but [laughter] but there is something ...

TOM: It's true, yeah. Yeah, I am fully with you there.

BRID: They're cannon fodder.

RES: You mentioned the last time you were here, Brid, last time you said that was the case of the working class were being colonised [BRID: Absolutely], the last to be colonised which is why everyone here says they identify with the working class English. But it's anyone who's kind of above that that it's a different relationship. That's what's struck me as well and, you know, that's there again in the room, again ...

ALISH: I think it's in that space, isn't it. It's a kind of, it is a sort of I see it as a mutual sense of powerlessness in a way because there's almost that kind of, it's so rigid, it is so rigid the system here, the class system here and people are kept, kept in these kind of lonely places. And so there is a, I think that's probably why I find it easy working with people who are from the lower, you know ... Lower, interesting that I use

Identifying with the English working class

Waking up

Becoming aware of the oppression

Lucy O'Connor 4/3/13 15:37

**Comment [4]:** And the Irish? Revolt or resignation. We too fear talking about IT!!

Oppressing structures...Being oppressed....identifying with English working class

Lucy O'Connor 2/3/13 15:02

**Comment [5]:** Army...war....being used..oppressed... war image

Identifying with the English working class:

Experiencing a mutual sense of powerlessness in the incultural

Oppressing structures ..rigid..

Oppressing structures: hierarchy

Lucy O'Connor 2/3/13 15:05

**Comment [6]:** I sense the empathy with the lonely...something personal experienced...

Experiencing loneliness in the intercultural space

Identifying with working class: identifying with 'lower' classes



## Excerpt Focused Coding: Session 3/1: Feb 1, 2013

**that word.** But the other thing that I wanted to say was about bringing an English therapist that really threw up lots of really uncomfortable feelings for me and it was like who do I know that I could bring. [DERMOT laughs] And I think what was very interesting was my unease because I have good English friends but in the world of therapy, the therapists I know are mixed Italian, Greek, Australian, you know, and the therapist I'm thinking of bringing if I can her great-grandmother was Irish so it's like, you know, like English therapists ... My feeling was very, very, you know, very interesting because it **was like inviting someone into a space that I already feel quite protective of**, so that was very interesting for me, it was like a ...

DERMOT: I felt like that as well, it was, you felt that as well, There's, is that I thought that they'll just laugh actually. In a sense of what I said about the guy about Davos, in a sense it's really deep, the sense of they'll come in and just laugh.

AILISH: Really?

DERMOT: Yeah. They'll go out and snigger behind our backs as my mother used to say. [laughs] They'll say something different behind your backs. So I imagine they'd come in and then go out and snigger. Is any of that ... That's my sense.

BRID: It wakes up a really aggressive part in me that wakes up if I thought that anyone would do such a thing, I just want to rip something. [laughter] I'd be really annoyed if I felt that anyone wasn't respectful of this space. And actually because I haven't been totally in touch with the group I didn't realise this was an option. And I work with a load of therapists and many of them are from other places, some of them are Brits, some of them are people I really like very much, but only one comes to mind and I hope she's free to come and she wouldn't be the closest of people to me but I'm like she's coming, you know, she would be, she'd be a good person to bring. And maybe, I don't know what she'd make of it but she's robust and she's bright and she's funny and she's British. I don't know that she's any Irish connections but I could feel her being here. And it makes me think

....

Dialoguing on Difference: feeling uncomfortable

Dialoguing on Difference: being uneasy

Dialoguing on Difference: Being wary of choice of 'audience' to voice opinions

Dialoguing on Difference: being intruded upon

Dialoguing on Difference: Protecting the Irish space

Identifying with minority identity: choosing a therapist who has Irish connection transgenerationally

Dialoguing on difference: Feeling that Irish will be laughed at in dialoguing on difference

Dialoguing on difference: Fearing shame

Dialoguing on difference: Fearing ridicule

Experiencing discriminating

Experiencing shame: identifying with the oppressor and oppressed?

Dialoguing on difference: Fearing shame

Dialoguing on difference: Fearing ridicule

Dialoguing on difference: Rising aggression in face of ridicule

Experiencing anger

Protecting the cultural space

Dialoguing on difference: being wary of choice of 'audience' to voice opinions

## Excerpt Focused Coding: Session 3/1: Feb 1, 2013

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it tells me more about her than this. It's an interesting thing to think that she's the first person who came to mind. Funny that.

Dialoguing on difference: Protecting the English

RES: But it's kind of, you know, it's sad in a sense when I'm sitting here thinking about the Irish clients who are thinking, sitting there, saying is this person going to laugh at me, or if I say something will they be laughing when I leave.

BRID: Jesus!

Experiencing anger (internalized intercultural?)

RES: And that's what we're dealing with here as well.

ALISH: Almost like the expectation, isn't it. People if you're going into something new and different and you've already got that expectation that you're not going to be taken seriously, you know, that's really quite, quite challenging, isn't it.

Experiencing therapy with the English therapist: Not being taken seriously

Experiencing therapy with the English therapist: Being challenged

[pause]

DERMOT: I suppose maybe I was educated here actually but I don't feel the Irish education system, that actually I was taken seriously, just because of my name, you know, during the Sixties and that, I always sensed behind there was a sense of not being taken seriously. And that might be my stuff, I don't know. So it's there. So what you just said there was, that an Irish client it must be painful.

Experiencing discrimination/racism: Not being taken seriously

Experiencing discrimination/racism: sensing that one is not being taken seriously

Experiencing therapy with an English therapist: being painful

Feeling the pain in the intercultural space

**BRID: I feel very sad at the moment actually. This ... This is a very sad turn in our journey. Because it's true, I think this is true. There's something about this being at the heart of it. The jokes, being laughed at.**

*(Process: Becoming aware of unsaid)*

Experiencing the therapeutic relational: Being shamed

GERRY: There's obviously, there's a lot of material in that room in terms of the Irish interpretation as the kind of, the butt of many, many jokes but things have

Experiencing the therapeutic relational: being shamed and being missed

Experiencing the therapeutic relational: complexity

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moved on in terms of the **Irish thick jokes** but I think it still lingers on. [several: hmm, hmm, agree]

DERMOT: And it doesn't bear any relation to the facts, that's what so amazing. You don't even see a relation to the facts. [laughter and banter]

BRID: That there's an inverse thing or something as well, you know.

THERESE: But it would be interesting to know how much of it is fact. I mean, obviously how we feel is fact, I suppose, in a way. But you wonder how much of that, especially the old stuff how much of it is projecting onto them. Because sometimes I wonder do some people even hear my accent? I know clearly I have it but, you know, you just wonder if some people even hear it. And that's bad also because that could be that you're not different, you're not special if you like, unique, people, you know. So I think, I don't know I'd love to know from these English therapists, you know, they'd be brave if they said they thought we were stupid. [laughter] To be honest but you know ...

RES: But you know that's what the stereotype would be?

THERESE: Maybe it's projecting onto this English therapist that maybe they don't think at all, they're seeing ...

BRID: The English are definitely bigger in our heads than we are in theirs. Even going back to our education, our history everything that we were taught, England was big. Ireland is just one of many colonies they have, the closest and the most troublesome. But ...

RES: Yeah. And also it's like TOM said because we were affected by it, you know, our history is affected by it, that's why we have to take England seriously but you were saying, Dermot, a similar thing, they don't

Changing times: things moving on: jokes changing....(perhaps more subtle)...

Experiencing the therapeutic relational: lingering assumptions

Constructing truth?

Avoidance: using humour to lighten the atmosphere

Experiencing the therapeutic relationship: colluding with the therapist....mutual influencing RIG

Experiencing the therapeutic relational: Feelings experienced as 'real'

Experiencing the therapeutic relational: Projecting the historical 'old stuff' onto the Other

Experiencing the intercultural: not being heard

Being missed

Being perceived as the same

Experiencing loss

Dialoguing on difference: Being curious to discover what the English therapist conceptualises the relationship

Dialoguing on difference: Being shamed

Dialoguing on difference: Daring to voice assumptions?

Constructing the therapeutic relational: Projecting our historical objects onto the English therapist

Experiencing the intercultural/the therapeutic relational: feeling smaller/insignificant?

Experiencing the intercultural: English are bigger in Irish psyche than the Irish are in theirs

Experiencing the intercultural: Being less important

Transgenerational transmission...colonialism to interpersonal to intrapsychic

Experiencing the historical relating: Ireland as one of the many colonies, the closest (white but not quite) and the most troublesome.

Experiencing the historical relating: Ireland as troublesome

Experiencing the historical relational: Ireland as close

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have to take us seriously with the past, you know, with the border control. And Northern Ireland is still there.

BRID: But I'd say the IRA probably kept them on their toes for a while as well in terms of taking us seriously. That they'd got this dichotomy in their minds that we were either clowns or murderers. That there was always that kind of around as well.

TOM: And I suppose there is the other, double thing going on in more recent times, the kind of the, the Celtic Tiger and its collapse and people being able to kind of almost laugh at that ..the Irish getting their 'comeuppance' and yet you would also find news stories and this mostly in financial pages of that of the way that the Irish economy is now turning around, or the Levenson thing that there is laws about the media in Ireland and if it works in Ireland for English newspapers why wouldn't it work in England, so that ... Or the plastic bags, banning them, that there are so many initiatives that are being tried in Ireland and that people from, and the government from this country are looking, you know, to see, it's almost as if we've kind of become the canary in the mine, whatever, where things are being tested.

BRID: I was expecting a lot more laughing actually after the crash then came.

TOM: Yes.

BRID: Not so Riverdancy now. [laughter]

DERMOT: I was looking on the BBC News today, I don't know if you saw it, I didn't see it before today but there was a guy found in I think it was Longford actually and ... No, was it Enniskillen, [TOM: Fermanagh] Fermanagh, and he was a 68-year old and he was a billionaire or something, he was a property developer that sold property in Dubai, and they found him on the road, he'd been on the road for eight months. He hadn't got any shoes. I mean, he had a helicopter, a Porsche car, and he was found on the

Experiencing the historical relational: Gaining acknowledgement through aggression

Experiencing the historical relational: Constructing dichotomy between clowns and murders

Lucy O'Connor 4/3/13 16:19

**Comment [7]:** Being taken seriously or not being taken seriously...anger when belief not and then aggressive (see Brid's reaction above....also mine!!!)

Experiencing the intercultural: Expecting ridicule...shame

Experiencing the intercultural: Deserving failure

Lucy O'Connor 4/3/13 16:24

**Comment [8]:** I am reflecting back to what Brid said in Session 1....that we have a sense of 'not deserving'...and now we have here the interpersonal/intercultural dynamic of the collective English being assumed to think the same?

Experiencing the intercultural: Test country

Experiencing the intercultural: expecting successes to be overlooked

Lucy O'Connor 4/3/13 16:19

**Comment [9]:** However...Colonial relating: Ireland was actually used as a 'test-bed or guinea-pig' for many 'tests'. Ideas were tested in Ireland before they were applied in English. Colonization was first put to test in Ireland (find reference again!)

Lucy O'Connor 4/3/13 16:30

**Comment [10]:** 'Today, the practice of using a bird to test the air supply has become part of coal mining lore, but the ideology behind it has become a popular expression. The phrase "living like a canary in a coal mine" often refers to serving as a warning to others. The actual canary had little control over its fate, but it continued to sing anyway. In one sense, living this way indicates a willingness to experience life's dangers without compromise.' (Wisegeek)

Experiencing the intercultural :Expecting to be shamed

Lucy O'Connor 4/3/13 16:23

**Comment [11]:** Is there something here about the Irish not deserving to succeed...despite every success, will always eventually fail?

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street by a couple, they thought it was a rag on the side of the road.

Lucy O'Connor 4/3/13 16:30

**Comment [12]:** Imagery of transgenerational trauma...side of road...rags....roaming....loss...dying

BRID: DEAD? Was he dead?

DERMOT: No, he was alive but he was like just something happened there. I thought that was quite symbolic almost. About the Celtic Tiger.

RES: The crash.

[pause]

BRID: Just on the funny kind of dangerous dichotomy one of the things that I was thinking about bringing the English therapist here is not so much, although a bit of whether they laugh, it's more they will see that there's actually a lot more darkness to us than I'm prepared to show actually.

Experiencing the intercultural: Fearing shame

Experiencing the intercultural: Hiding the darkness

DERMOT: Hmm. That's interesting.

RES: It's kind of scary then in that sense?

Experiencing the intercultural: Hiding the darkness

**BRID: It feels safer, I'd say maybe rather than it feeling scary, it definitely feels safer to keep a handle on that whatever that darkness is, that sort of, the darker kind of edge to feelings, the darker scales of the spectrum. It feels safer to keep that among our own type thing. Because I suppose, I don't know which is worse them thinking us ridiculous or them being scared of us, because when they're scared of people they treat people they're scared of very badly. You know, appearing not to be a threat is probably not a bad move if you're not British. Do you know. [laughs]**

Experiencing the intercultural: feeling safer hiding the darkness

Experiencing the intercultural: Being perceived as ridiculous or dangerous

Experiencing the intercultural: Fear of threatening

Experiencing the intercultural: Fearing retaliation

Experiencing the intercultural: Presenting self as non-threatening

RES: Is that what Irish people have done over generations?

## **Appendix 9**

**Category Building**

**Cooperative Inquiry**

Category	Subcategory	Focused Codes	Sample Excerpts
The Irish English Historical Relational	Constructing the Colonial Relational	Living Oppression, Famine, Emigration	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• ‘...like the British oppression...those kinds of oppressions have been around for ages and maybe...now it will be the European bank ... ‘oh...you are a bad European’ ...or ...we are very easy to oppress (Brid)</li> <li>• ‘(My grandmother) grew up in very hard times and they were farmer, and like her father remembers the famine and you know, and people coming in, they had land and they had a pig trough and people who’d be walking the road used to come in and take the food that the pigs were getting, you know, so like there is all this kind of history’ (Therese)</li> <li>• ‘There’s been discussion about it, I don’t know that much about it, but basically, you know, that it was the first genocide. And you know all about this better than I do, but it’s quite, you know, quite a ... That was only a hundred years ago, no, 150 years ago’...(and) ‘That’s very deep, isn’t it’ (Dermot)</li> <li>• ‘And so you know, where there is a whole, we’re a whole nation that for me is still recovering from trauma, the trauma of colonisation, and that’s how I see it that actually...’ (Ailish)</li> <li>• ‘I often stood on the platform in Connemara station and, you know, the number of people who would have left from there to emigrate or to go from Galway, who, I suppose it’s extraordinary. I remember we used to have a statistic that of a family of three in Ireland one would emigrate, one would migrate to Dublin and one would stay at home on the farm. And funnily enough, that’s exactly what my family have done’ (Tom)</li> </ul>
		Living Emotion	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• (Famine): ‘it was a terribly shameful thing to happen, and I think like it could, it’s like a lot of other things but also nobody wants to be poor...to be starving and nobody wants to lose half their population’ (Therese)</li> <li>• I think there’s almost a, not generic, not genetically, but I think, I think there is an inherited loss, loss is all...I think I feel loss when I think about my history...’ (Gerry)</li> <li>• ‘That theme of loss runs maybe more deeply. I mean, there mightn’t be much on the page here, but I do think that it runs, it is something that runs very deeply within us’ (Tom)</li> <li>• (Like the Jews) ‘we are onto the shame-guilt thing as well’ (Brid)</li> <li>• ‘I know from my brother’s digging around, I know how we survived the Famine...I know how our families survived the Famine, and it took me quite a while to come to terms of what had happened...there is a lot of stuff...’ (Tom)</li> <li>• ‘Decisions were made that were practical decisions but there was no...Emotions were a luxury. It was about survival and food and shelter and basic needs’ (Ailish)</li> <li>• ‘Addiction is a way of dealing with feelings, and that combination of the extent to which the, I suppose Irish society had a very intense relationship...with the drink and at the same time possibly the survivor guilt from the time of the Famine’ (Tom)</li> <li>• ‘but then my sister...I said she (Queen in Dublin) spoke Irish my sister said ...you know...there is all this history...speaking Irish is not going to wipe it out’ (Therese)</li> </ul>

Category	Subcategory	Focused Codes	Sample Excerpts
The Irish English Historical Relational	Surviving Cultural Trauma	Silencing the Past	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• <i>‘The Jews will talk about the Holocaust...do we talk about the famine...no it is kinda like...we had that coming, sort of (Brid)’</i></li> <li>• <i>‘It was almost like the laments and all that, and it wasn’t just about him on a personal level, it was this whole culture, history, everything being played out and sung in that ballad’ (Ailish)</i></li> <li>• <i>‘All the positive things we can celebrate openly, I think’ (and) ‘but I don’t think anybody wants to think about those (things i.e. colonization, famine, loss)’ (Therese)</i></li> <li>• <i>‘I’m just thinking for me how much of my history I don’t know about’ (Gerry)</i></li> </ul>
		Adopting a Strict Moral Code	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• <i>‘...for me the Catholic Irish bit like I think it, like what you say, I think it’s hard to prise apart our culture and our Irishness and our Catholicism, I think. But for me the word punitive comes in. So I think, I suppose for me I think we’ve probably handled it historically punitively, so that feels like it’s suited our character to do that’ (Therese)</i></li> <li>• <i>‘(We Catholics were) morally, morally, morally better (than the Protestant English)’ (Dermot)</i></li> <li>• <i>‘Belief that we are spiritually, you know, far higher than our English neighbours. Our English neighbours are decadent, you know they’re promiscuous. You know all the kind of isms’ (Ailish)</i></li> <li>• <i>‘It (Ireland) was just unitary, there was no variety, it was just this way, was the only way. And the morality was that way, it didn’t have options’ (Tom)</i></li> <li>• <i>‘But to really go to existential pain, sure it will be alright in the next life, it will be, you know, what can you do kind of...’ (Brid)</i></li> </ul>
		Hiding and Adapting	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• <i>‘It’s not even 100 years and you’re talking, my mother was saying she actually changed her name to an English name in order to get work, it wasn’t good to have a name called Mairead. So it was Margaret...’ (Ailish)</i></li> <li>• <i>‘Those changing your name in your own country, it’s the reason why you’ve changed your name in your own country. Because I think like my mother was educated in Irish, but my grandmother she never learned Irish at all. I was horrified. She was born, I think at the end of the 1800s and so I, so though it’s your own country it’s still totally inherited past, you know, because you wouldn’t have to change your name amongst in theory Irish people if that was acceptable. So it’s still the colonial past reason, I suppose for doing that’ (Therese)</i></li> <li>• <i>‘But what was, you know, they were the last, absolutely the last outpost of Irish of spoken Irish existed in the fifties and very early sixties in areas that had become English speaking’ (Tom)</i></li> <li>• <i>(Queen’s visit) ‘...obviously the Dublin thing had to be very staged because you had to keep people back’ (Therese) ‘...they concreted all the manholes’ (Dermot)</i></li> </ul>



Category	Subcategory	Focused Codes	Sample Excerpts
The Irish English Relational in English Context	Struggling with an ambivalent identity: hybridity	Struggling with an ambivalent identity: hybridity	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• 'I can see myself being part of this society but on the other hand not part...there is a kind of struggle and despair that goes with that...and at the same time it is very rich...I think...glass half-empty...half-full and I suppose when I feel good about myself'(Gerry)</li> <li>• 'When I am in Ireland I am thought of as being English and I am not being thought of as being Irish here. It's a loss really, it's just a loss. It's a loss that one experiences' (Dermot)</li> <li>• 'I felt a long time that I am hybrid...neither one or the other...' ( Joanne)</li> <li>• '...coming over here...lonely...challenging...racist context...all of that...but somehow a bit of freedom....more options...maybe access to further education'(Brid)</li> </ul>
	Struggling with an ambivalent identity: hybridity	Communicating Differently	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• 'We speak English differently and we associate different meanings with words...Irish people often say yes when we mean no...not wanting to be "rude" but English might see that as being devious...whereas the English say "no" and Irish see that as very rude' (Brid)</li> <li>• 'The Irish tend to repeat stories...people may say... "you said you said that before"... "it bears repeating" I say...there is something about repetition that feels important...you have only to look at the columns of an Irish newspaper compared to an English paper and it is twice as long...than an Irish because it takes twice as long to say it...the English tend to be very succinct...I am not downing other different ways...but...it certainly is a different culture' (Dermot)</li> <li>• 'My partner and myself, who's, she's an English woman, and it was only at some stage there were various difficulties we were having in communication and it was only one day, and I tended to talk in a more impersonal kind of way and...when we explored what was happening about my use of language which for her didn't have enough "I" statements in it, but what I realised was that I was using Irish Gaelic idioms in, as I was talking English, and that the Irish language doesn't have words, I would have to think of examples now which I won't sitting here, but it has a much more' (Tom)</li> </ul>
	Feeling Culturally Different in Relationship	Experiencing Discrimination	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• (I have) 'certainly experienced discrimination as an Irish person' (Dermot)</li> <li>• 'She made some comment about bogs that I could not believe and...it was racist...I have an English accent...but I bristled...I bristled...' (Dermot)</li> <li>• 'I think there is a reaction to myself as an Irish person, erm, which would differ...wouldn't be malicious but it would be kind of...putting you in your place...' (Tom)</li> <li>• 'If I use the turn of phrase that might be more identified with Hiberno-English people laugh or make a joke, and it's happened in the therapy context' (and later) 'like an almost Father Ted moment...' (Brid)</li> <li>• 'It's not just the language (of the joke), is it, it's what comes with it, I suppose, the feeling around it' (Therese)</li> <li>• 'Yeah, (Irish labelled as) being thick, the Irish being thick and stupid' (Ailish)</li> </ul>

Category	Subcategory	Focused Codes	Sample Excerpts
The Irish English Relational in English Context	Feeling Culturally Different in Relationship	Identifying with Marginalized Identities	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• ‘We didn’t consciously go into relationships thinking I like you because we have a common enemy...let’s get them back...it was all subconscious stuff’ (Ailish)</li> <li>• (Celts)... ‘a relationship built on joining forces and neither of us being English’ (Joanne)</li> <li>• ‘I tend to be more comfortable with people who are clearly different (to the English)’ (Gerry)</li> <li>• ‘I completely empathise with people who have experienced discrimination’ (Brid)</li> <li>• ‘I am feeling very strongly that the kind of unfairness of whatever, that I suppose oppresses people within our own society here in England’ (Tom)</li> <li>• ‘I am more empathic to people who come from outside England’ (Dermot)</li> </ul>
		Encountering the Intercultural Emotional	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• ‘I wanted that (Irish hearth image) to be part of what I am, and then I get afraid of that, am I going down a Leprechaun route...it is a real old fashioned imagery’ (Joanne)</li> <li>• ‘The colonial piece is the big difference that there is the persecutor – victim...and maybe something of the other...the victim...in the other...’ (Brid)</li> <li>• ‘Yeah, and I think it’s not being good enough, it’s not measuring up, it’s being flawed in some ways. It’s being, like holding onto the past or, you know, I don’t know, but it’s something like that. It’s, it’s, it’s not the same, you know. I know difference should be embraced but it’s, you know, if you think difference is shadowy and openly maybe then it’s hard to embrace it and I suppose the thing is, you know, will the people understand and will they accept it’ (Therese)</li> <li>• ‘And there was something about at that time for me; there was a lot of shame around and it wasn’t, it wasn’t in my awareness so much’ (Ailish)</li> <li>• ‘They interviewed this guy to give his view and he came on with an Irish accent. And actually I was just thinking as I was talking to you, I immediately felt nobody will take this person seriously...(and)...that’s quite strong’ (Dermot)</li> <li>• ‘I thought that they’ll just laugh actually. In a sense of what I said about the guy, about Davos, in a sense it’s really deep, the sense of they’ll come in and just laugh’ (Dermot)</li> <li>• ‘I am Gerry “O”’(English)...or “O”’(Hiberno-English). I think I didn’t hear the O’(Hiberno-English) until I was a teenager at school one day, the teacher said O’S (Hiberno-English) and at first I was shocked...and I thought...felt...like...I thought he was taking the mickey’ (Gerry)</li> </ul>

Category	Subcategory	Focused Codes	Sample Excerpts
The Irish English Relational in English Context	Managing Cultural Difference in Relationship	Silencing	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>‘People over here don’t want to talk about the difference....they don’t want to discriminate...sensitivity..between the English and Irish...don’t want to say the wrong thing...and people want to say...we are all the same...normalizing ’(Therese)</li> <li>‘The Irish keep things in, they don’t talk about relationships, that’s immoral isn’t it’ (Dermot)</li> <li>‘We don’t talk about the Famine here’ (Joanne)</li> <li>‘I’d say maybe rather than it feeling scary, it definitely feels safer to keep a handle on that, whatever that darkness is, that sort of, the darker kind of edge to feelings, the darker scales of the spectrum. It feels safer to keep that among our own type thing. Because, I suppose, I don’t know which is worse them thinking us ridiculous or them being scared of us, because when they’re scared of people they treat people they’re scared of very badly. You know, appearing not to be a threat is probably not a bad move if you’re not British’ (Brid)</li> </ul>
			<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>‘...because I want to be the same...I don’t want the shame of being different...don’t want to embarrass myself if I don’t pronounce my “th’s”...I don’t want to do that...I want to pronounce them because I want to be accepted...I think it is probably...for some reason, this is where I go’ (Therese)</li> <li>‘Downplaying, keeping below the radar, particularly if there was something, you know, something in the news’ (Joanne)</li> </ul>
		Hiding and Adapting	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>‘In terms of going out of that Irish into the English, it was about you need to behave in a certain way. I don’t know about the word behave, but you mustn’t stand out. I think that affected me in my autonomy actually. I felt I had to fit into something rather than being part of it...that’s very strong actually’ (Dermot)</li> <li>‘...there was a lot of shame around and it wasn’t, it wasn’t in my awareness so much, but there was a sense of keep a low profile, keep your nose down, don’t, don’t, you know, mind your accent, speak, don’t, you know, be conscious of saying cooker (English accent) rather than cooker (Irish accent), you know, sort of downplaying, sort of trying to be invisible, trying to be invisible, that’s actually, there was this kind of judgement and hostility and, you know, insecurity. You felt quite insecure, you know. So it’s, it is interesting that certainly at that time there was fear there and you were very conscious that you could be victimised or ridiculed or...’ (Ailish)</li> <li>‘I’ve learned to speak English the way English people speak English. Which probably draws less attention, even in a kind of preconscious way, to the difference’ (Brid)</li> </ul>
			<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>‘You are hidden as an Irish person...hidden amongst....the English’ (Dermot)</li> <li>‘Actually they didn’t see me as any different from them...they just saw me as being white’ (Ailish)</li> <li>‘...they (the English) have to pretend it’s all just, oh, we’re all white, we’re all Western, we’re all, you know, so similar’ (Therese)</li> <li>‘They (English) almost see us as being more part of them’ (Brid)</li> <li>‘Because sometimes I wonder do some people even hear my accent? I know clearly I have it but, you know, you just wonder if some people even hear it. And that’s bad also because that could be that you’re not</li> </ul>

Category	Subcategory	Focused Codes	Sample Excerpts
The Irish English Therapeutic Relational	Fearing Oppression	Being Shamed	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• 'I do think she did get a kick out of making me feel uncomfortable talking about sex' (Brid)</li> <li>• 'There's obviously, there's a lot of material in that room in terms of the Irish interpretation as the kind of, the butt of many, many jokes but things have moved on in terms of the Irish thick joke, but I think it still lingers on' (Gerry) (several: hmm, hmm, agree)</li> <li>• 'They'll (English therapists) go out and snigger behind our backs as my mother used to say. (Laughs) They'll say something different behind your backs. So I imagine they'd come in and then go out and snigger' (Dermot )</li> <li>• 'It's the transference...this English therapist, I could see him as a colonial oppressor' (Gerry)</li> <li>• 'It did take years and I did try and avoid it. I wanted to leave a few times (laughs) and again it was me feeling very uncomfortable with it because it was having to go into a very difficult, a very hard dark shaming, shameful place' (Ailish)</li> <li>• 'I think it was easy enough to go to shadowy places there. The exception would be we never spoke about the past histories between England or Ireland. Like if she used a word I didn't understand, we never spoke about where that might take me to and how I might feel inferior' (Therese)</li> <li>• 'I wonder what they make of me being an Irish woman and if they associate me with being...old-fashioned religious...' (Joanne)</li> <li>• 'I feel very sad at the moment actually. This...this is a very sad turn in our journey. Because it's true, I think this is true. There's something about this being at the heart of it. The jokes, being laughed at' (Brid)</li> </ul>
		Being Missed	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• 'Cultural difference is...(a) kind of awkwardness and difficulty...because it is the big elephant in the (therapy) room' (Ailish)</li> <li>• 'We have never brought into the room the difference between us...and I do wonder about...where we might miss each other or where he might miss me' (Gerry)</li> <li>• 'And I suppose it could be, it's (the cultural difference) less visible for, for us as Irish people (vs. other colonized groups) and as an Irish person with an English accent; so not so obvious' (Gerry)</li> <li>• 'I think there is the thing that sometimes the problems seem to be more ours, you know, as in that we perceive them to be a problem and we know the history and lots of us, I suppose, want to remember it, whereas I think that it's not (here)...I suppose it's maybe they don't see the culture that comes in with us' (Therese)</li> <li>• 'There are differences in the culture...and there are differences...and I am wondering what I leave outside the therapy room in counselling...that I could bring in...that is valuable...why do I leave it outside?'(Dermot)</li> <li>• 'Sometimes that sense of (therapist thinking that) identifying with your otherness can open up a way to intimacy. And the fact that the other side of it, I suppose, that if they want to embrace you as part of their kind of comfortable middle class, that that's also possible' (Brid)</li> </ul>

Category	Subcategory	Focused Codes	Sample Excerpts
The Irish English Therapeutic Relational	Experiencing the Silenced Past	Experiencing the Silenced Past	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• <i>‘I recognize that, on an unconscious level, I could be going down the road...ahh...they have greater status...hmm...which isn’t just about two human beings in that room...it is about millions of people....and hundreds of years of history’ (Gerry)</i></li> <li>• <i>“The fact that this relationship was so different that I learned, you know, actually because it wasn’t cosy. I probably wouldn’t have grown as much if I’d have had an Irish therapist because the cosiness...you collude with our own, you know’ (Ailish)</i></li> <li>• <i>‘I was carrying all that history...and my past....my inferiority’ (Ailish)</i></li> <li>• <i>‘Almost like the expectation, isn’t it. People, if you’re going into something new and different and you’ve already got that expectation that you’re not going to be taken seriously, you know, that’s really quite, quite challenging, isn’t it’ (Ailish)</i></li> <li>• <i>‘I always sensed behind there was a sense of not being taken seriously. And that might be my stuff, I don’t know. So it’s there. So what you just said there was, that an Irish client it’s painful’ (Dermot)</i></li> <li>• <i>Brid: ‘I have been told (by English therapists that) you obviously have a problem with getting to the heart of things. And I found it really humbling, well, actually very shameful when it was pointed out to me that I wasn’t capable of intimacy, and I thought God, if there’s anything I can do it’s that...it was pretty brutal’ Therese: ‘It doesn’t feel safe’ Brid: ‘No, it set me back a lot. It was awful’</i></li> <li>• <i>‘We (Irish) have our ways that we might be going at things obliquely and that, you know, it’s something of getting into someone’s rhythm’ (and later) ‘it would be crude and anti-therapeutic to rip away that defence too quickly, you know’ (Brid)</i></li> <li>• <i>(Image of Irish being “thick and stupid”): ‘I think it’s still, some of it still sits there. No, with not with the hostility that was once there’ (Tom)</i></li> </ul>
	Becoming Other	Becoming Other	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• <i>“The assumptions could be that we’re exactly the same, you know, because we live the same and we either work over here, study over here, so yeah, that we’d be the same’ (Therese)</i></li> <li>• <i>(Therapists) ‘expect me to be in their frame of reference’ (Therese)</i></li> <li>• <i>‘The whole thing about difference is based mainly on black and white’ (Ailish)</i></li> <li>• <i>‘It’s (experience of difference to the English) almost a secrecy’ (Dermot)</i></li> <li>• <i>‘You are hidden as an Irish person...hidden amongst...the English’ (Dermot)</i></li> </ul>

## **Appendix 10**

**Category Building**

**Dialogic Workshop**



Category	Subcategory	Focused Codes	Sample Excerpts
Breaking the Silence on the Cultural Relational ('White' Irish Client Group)	Sharing Lived Collective Cultural Trauma	Living Oppression, Famine, Emigration	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>‘ ...I think the concept of trauma is very significant and also it is generational trauma....where there is the history right through to sitting here...and how does that reside in me’ (Gerry)</li> <li>Therese: ‘I don’t want to be the people where millions died because of hunger. It is also a blot..it is not a nice thing...if we want...and I think sometimes we want to have things that we are proud of in Ireland and that’s not something we are proud of and I think that is a dirty blot as well as a tragedy...that is what I think of the shame...I think it would be better if it didn’t happen that tis a big, disgusting...blot...and I think that is my shame around it is that it is a terrible thing to have...in our history’ Brid: ‘Like a big scar on your face or something’</li> <li>Ailish: ‘it was like with bated breath...is she (Queen in Ireland) going to be blown up...is there going to be bomb alerts....and I was saying that...and I thought...what was behind that...wasn’t that I really cared about he...it was more about what would be the impact of something like this happening...because there would be an impact and I guess that is where it came from’ Caroline: “and you still feel ...attached to the Irish part of...if something (bombing) did happen’ All Irish attendees agreeing: ‘ yes’</li> </ul>
		Surviving Trans-generational Cultural Trauma	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>...‘there was also the option of taking food if you renounced your Catholicism...yeah...quite a few people did that in order to live’ (Brid)</li> <li>‘It was pretty fearful to be out there with these views that I am angry about what the English did to my country...labelled terrorist’ (Gerry)</li> <li>‘They had dropped the “O”” ..maybe to anglicize it a bit’ (Brid )</li> <li>‘Only in the last ..just before I came to England in 1996...around that time that we in Ireland began to talk about the Famine and start setting up museums remembering it. It was really just in the shadow all the time’ (Tom)</li> <li>‘For me and for everyone in my family...I held my breath....get her back to bloody England safely’ ( Ailish)</li> <li>‘I can understand the whole dynamics around that...the personal attachment that ...that can drive somebody to express their anger...in an extremely violent way’ (Gerry)</li> </ul>
		ance in English Context	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>‘Like that sense of “easy to oppress” that bit...and I think I can see how that played out for me in the therapeutic relationship. I do feel that my therapist was quite oppressive actually...that is not to say that we did not do good or worthwhile work but I think there was something very dark in our relationship as well and she was quite fascinated by my Catholicism even though I had lapsed a long time ago...and I was not necessarily all that interested in talking about it actually to begin with but there was...I think...something not very nice co-created between she and I...and probably the best thing to do was to end that relationship’ (Brid)</li> <li>‘So again there was that whole...thing that reminds me of the ...the Irish-English kind of relationship...I did not want to upset her. So it took a long time for me to own that anger...couple of times that I wanted to stop and leave the therapy <u>but I was made to feel</u> that I was avoiding things...so my anger was about this oppressor wanting to hang onto me...as she was making money out of me so all that came up’ (Ailish)</li> <li>‘Like the shadows there are so many of them...there is anger about these things happening and there is also shame...and guilt...</li> </ul>

Category	Subcategory	Focused Codes	Sample Excerpts
Breaking the Silence on the Cultural Relational ('White' Irish Client Group)	Managing 'White' Irishness in the Cultural Relational	Silencing and Adapting	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>'...I find myself doing that quite easily, and I am wondering how much to what extent that is kind of an unconscious picking up...of what's being put in front of me and that I am making people feel at their ease almost....by fitting this stereotype to some extent...the kind of guilt that you are talking about...I am just aware' (Tom)</li> <li>'I think some of this stuff that we were mentioning earlier...the dangerous stuff...or the, I keep that very much inside' (Therese)</li> <li>'You know I am hidden as an Irish person...amongst the English' (Dermot)</li> <li>'I suppose I have internalized that some way that I am dangerous...probably better to be light...fluffy...light, but I do think there is a reservoir of rage' (Brid)</li> <li>Tom: 'Yes...(presenting self as) not dangerous. Therese: 'Not dangerous, yeah'</li> <li>'It (the abusive relationship between England and Ireland) is not talked about because it is shameful...and there is a mutual benefit to not talking about it' (Ailish)</li> <li>'I am very aware of...this shadow...I am also very aware of it...of the fear of the Irish client...the fear of the English therapist to bring up any of the understanding...the misunderstandings...the transference and stuff...I think it is hard to think that way and to bring it' (Therese)</li> <li>'They had dropped the "O"... maybe to anglicize it a bit' (Brid)</li> </ul>
		Becoming Other	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>'Second generation born here with Irish born parents...they may choose to identify themselves as English...which some do...but they still have got that heritage. They may firmly park themselves within the English camp...and so...however...they will have been shaped by their Irish background' (Gerry)</li> <li>'For me, if I was in English company, I always...I am...I always have to say my father was in the RAF and he fought in the war...I'd always have to say that...to justify in a way' (Dermot)</li> <li>'I think I probably, I would try to present myself as "the same"' (Therese)</li> <li>'You know I am hidden as an Irish person... amongst the English' (Dermot)</li> <li>'Like the shadows, there are so many of them...there is anger about these things happening and there is also shame...and guilt...and you know...that is what...when Gary was saying like it would only take us a couple of minutes to explain our culture... it's so mixed up that I find the feeling I think that is my thing...the emotions are so raw and so muddled...like it's so hard to describe them, I think...for me there are more emotions and fear than anything...properly...that you can talk about' (Therese)</li> <li>'A whole different sense of status...so I don't see Ireland as having the same status as England in a sense...I think that is quite symbolic...I could say...and give the wrong impression but there is a sort of subservience...that what comes up for me' (Dermot)</li> </ul>



Category	Subcategory	Focused Codes	Sample Excerpts
Entering the Cultural Relational (White English Therapist Group)	Sharing Assumptions and Stereotypes	Sharing Assumptions and Stereotypes	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>‘If you don’t mind me using this language...I’m sure you don’t...(L: not...not at all)...Irish are either stupid...or you are dangerous...hmm...I find it hard to say without feeling some feeling of guilt...but I feel that does represent a very strong stereotype’ (Gary)</li> <li>‘Irish people who came to work locally...they called them navvies who came to do seasonal work’ (Terry)</li> <li>‘I feel that is potentially difficult different....exceptional difference...almost certainly collectively unconscious...I think as you were speaking...whether I heard you right...I don’t know...how would I describe my culture in this room in a couple of minutes...I would struggle...my perception is that the Irish culture is already in the room...an Irish person...could be easily articulated in a couple of minutes...that is a perception of course...in other words it feels very strong...in my relationship with you’ (Gary)</li> <li>(Res: then just thinking back to that Irish accent...I wonder what images...or thoughts it brings up...) ‘the nuns at my boarding school...they were all Irish’ (Caroline)</li> <li>‘The Irish name would have an old resonance for me that appears to be totally independent in my being from any relationship or work I am doing...but if I had a client with an Irish name, I would have to manage the fact that when I was a child my family would have looked down on Irish people who came to work locally’ (Terry)</li> <li>‘You said about kind of anti-stereotype...for me...not being crowded out by all these other things and seeing the person...but with the accent comes all those other things (stereotypes)...sometimes I find it throws the frame wide open and that I sometimes can kind of lose the person...rather than working with somebody without the Irish accent I could see more the person first...and build from there...when all of a sudden...all of these things kind of rush in...and I suddenly have questions...and I wonder about their feelings this person holds around the family’ (Matthew)</li> </ul>
	Intercultural Emotional World	Threat	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>‘It is your history...we have our history as well...and because we didn’t learn your history...it is not connected in our heads...and I think...you end up sitting in a therapy session and for me...it is, I don’t understand it...I don’t have that history...I don’t, the history that we have with you and you do...you understand yours...’ (Caroline)</li> <li>‘I feel quite threatened, not in the anger sense...but I feel quite threatened...because somebody...has a history that I don’t have’ (Matthew)</li> <li>‘...there is a threat there in the sense of thinking that how am I going...to miss something massive that may have a major influence’ (Matthew)</li> <li>‘I think my take on the English as...you know...the imperialism...colonialism...oppression that I certainly hold in...in kind of reluctant to call...my culture...but I guess, maybe even tonight, I have become even more aware that...there is an entrenchment for those...feelings like...I can’t...I don’t think...if that is part of English culture...most of it is unconscious...and therefore you can’t escape from it...because we can’t escape from it then we have to fear retaliation...If I have created an assault on someone...I must somewhere in my psyche always fear...those that were assaulted will retaliate...somehow or other there has to be somebody who is dangerous and at the moment it is the Muslims...it was the Irish...it is kind of...we have to have someone to fear...’ (Gary)</li> <li>‘I was really shocked by that actually because that makes it very...that is a huge statement...fear of that (the Irish darkness), I suppose’ (Matthew)</li> </ul>
			<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>‘I share a kind of...guilt...as a person from a British culture...you know...on a political level at least...understands the occupation of my culture of somebody else...and I don’t hold a self-blame for that but I do get a kind of almost a collective regret...guilt...guilt...that rises up in me emotionally when I am in the presence...like tonight...with people from an Irish culture’ (Gary)</li> </ul>

Category	Subcategory	Focused Codes	Sample Excerpts
Entering the Cultural Relational (White English Therapist Group)	Experiencing the 'Missing'	Experiencing the 'Missing'	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• <i>'With the accent comes all those other things...sometimes I find it throws the frame wide open and that I sometimes can kind of lose the person...rather than working with somebody without the Irish accent I could see more the person first....and build from there...when all of a sudden....all of these things kind of rush in and I suddenly have questions...and I wonder about their feelings this person holds around the family' (Matthew)</i></li> <li>• <i>'I think what Matthew was saying...I sense an ignorance on my part in the sense that you do have history and culture and I could not understand the depth of your religion ...the depth of your culture...the way you know your families are more united than ours' (Caroline)</i></li> <li>• <i>'That culture...is terribly background...what we are talking about tonight is more real but harder to talk about...it's...but it's...somehow the individual focus is part of that dynamic that keeps it on the fringe' (Terri)</i></li> <li>• <i>'This something hidden....if that is the perception....don't know if that is a reflection or a universal prior concept...doesn't fit for me...wanting to hide...needing to hide...I am struck by this shame that you were talking about...I think it was on the previous slide...the shame of the survivor...and I wonder about the anger towards the oppressor...I haven't heard much of that or seen much of that' (Gary)</i></li> <li>• <i>'Somebody...has a history that I don't have....that I assume...that my assumption...that if I have internalized history....that socio-political....socio-cultural..that I don't feel I have got because of my background' (Matthew)</i></li> <li>• <i>'I am going to be missing probably loads of stuff...you know what I mean because I am focusing on one direction and I am aware of that as we are talking. I have been missing bits of me...and bits of the other....this is my growth curve I fear' (Terry)</i></li> <li>• <i>'It is just that assumption because you share a language....that you are sharing all the other reference points and we didn't' (Terry)</i></li> <li>• <i>'To put it in a nutshell, Irish have a culture and we, English, don't feel at least as if we have' ( and) ' I feel that is potentially difficult different....exceptional difference...almost certainly collectively unconscious' (Gary)</i></li> <li>• <i>'My first thought on reading that...as an English...therapist...I am reading that and thinkin...something about what I was saying earlier...feelings of...it's the shame...and I find myself thinking ignorantly what was the Famine about....and I kind of I am feeling the shame of not knowing and then I am think if I was sitting with a client who may be feeling that shame...and then to talk about it...I would not have a clue' (Matthew)</i></li> <li>• <i>'I was actually blind to the difference for a long time so I guess it wouldn't be easy' (Terry)</i></li> <li>• <i>'When you were talking about oppression because it felt like for me...thinking...that door to oppression is still slightly ajar and actually not having an understanding of lapsed (Hiberno-English meaning of lapsed Catholic)...vs ex...vs all of that...to what extent would I think of Catholicism as a bigger part of the frame than it actually is for the person...(Brid: 'very interesting')...and actually that for me creates the fear that I could so easily come across as oppressive...holding a lapsed idea...obviously...thinking it is still there but on hold' (Matthew)</i></li> </ul>

Category	Subcategory	Focused Codes	Sample Excerpts
Entering the Cultural Relational (White English Therapist Group)	Managing White Englishness in the Cultural Relational	Silencing	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Caroline: 'I wonder why we don't talk about it' (Irish history) Matthew: 'We don't...' Caroline: 'Why don't we talk about it'</li> <li>• 'This is something that I have never said before...this is not...this is authentic, genuine...in the moment...I have not articulated...this is not an articulation I am repeating...it is new tonight in a way...it is bubbling up' (Gary)</li> <li>• 'Thinking of that difference...I was sending an email to T...it lurks in his email...an article I read very early in my counselling life stayed with me...important reference frame in my own head...McCloud...1999 counselling journal' (Terry)</li> <li>• 'Somebody has done statistics...and I think you can take nearly everybody and nobody is British...because I am fair skinned and there is not way that somewhere along the line I did not come from somewhere else...Scandinavian...some of my ancestors...we are all...every single one of us...in the last 100 years emigrated into the UK...' (Caroline)</li> </ul>
		Rejecting English Identity	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• 'Things came up for me...rejection of the language of the British Empire or Great Britain...and it threw up an image...image...it was quite sort of...I kind of dispelled of...and didn't want it' (Matthew)</li> <li>• 'I think my take on the English a...you know...the imperialism...colonialism...oppression that I certainly hold in...in kind of reluctant to call...my culture' (Gary)</li> <li>• 'I think being in the different...culture...makes that easier...you are half in and half out...a kind of neutrality...it is harder for me as an English person to project my stuff onto somebody who is already half in and half out...it stayed with me and made sense of my feeling of being half in and half out in this culture' (Terry)</li> <li>• 'I identify the flag of St. George with the the glorification of colonialism...occupation and it is now represented by the far Right groups and yet essentially that flag of St. George represents...is the iconic flag of my culture...and I was repulsed and concerned' (Gary)</li> </ul>
		Identifying with Minority Culture	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• 'I am from very much a working-class background...and my ancestors...whilst the upper classes were carrying out acts of Imperialism and so on...it was equally my class that was punished, vilified...downtrodden in different ways' (Gary)</li> <li>• 'I have great-, greatgrandparents who came over here...and settled in Liverpool' (Caroline)</li> <li>• 'It described the role of therapist as having one foot in and one foot out...and I think me being in that different...culture...makes that easier' (Terry)</li> </ul>

Category	Subcategory	Focused Codes	Sample Excerpts
Making Meaning in the Cultural Relationship	Reaching New Levels of Awareness	Becoming Aware	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>‘It is your history...we have our history as well...and because we didn't learn your history...it is not connected in our heads...and I think...you end up sitting in a therapy session and for me...it is I don't understand it...I don't have that history...I don't the history that we have with you and you do...you understand yours’ (Caroline)</li> <li>‘...and yet perhaps also through the trauma that you also spoke about tonight...maybe it's the trauma...the unrelenting trauma that has not been able to be moved on...maybe because it has not been able to be spoken...you know...named...leaves that sense of identification with the oppressor rather than the anger towards the oppressor’ (Gary)</li> <li>‘I am aware that that my cultural frames of reference would be a long way back and I might make assumptions laden with meaning, but the frames of reference which I would use in the room would be to do my training...much more foreground’ (Terry)</li> <li>‘But I guess maybe even tonight I have become even more aware that...there is an entrenchment for those...feelings like...I can't...I don't think...if that is part of English culture...most of it is unconscious...and therefore you can't escape from it’ (Gary)</li> <li>‘What I noticed here was nobody knew about the Irish...nobody knew about the Irish history...it was just not part of the training’ (Ailish)</li> <li>‘...about integrating those two to make me...“in”, in having two cultures. How I translate that is now to begin honouring that in fact I have two cultures, English and Irish...to hear you say that I find it very touching actually...and I think this is what your research is about really’ (Dermot)</li> <li>‘What I have been noticing tonight...is that also I am projecting ...I project a lot onto you, the English therapist...that I am listening to you and you are not aware of some of the stuff that I am projecting onto you...you know like...I can't think of an example but it would be something like...I am not good enough or smart enough or clever enough’ (Therese)</li> <li>‘I am very intrigued by that...the “easy to oppress” ...when you (Matthew) were thinking about your feelings about words...what came to mind for me was the...I had a real sense of the Irish-English relationship as being similar to a very...enmeshed codependent relationship where the abuse has happened but there is still the dependency there, and because of that there has not been the clarity of other nations who have been able to say...this is our experience...this is what has happened between...there is that whole I feel confusion because there is a codependency’(Ailish)</li> <li>‘I think being in the different...culture...makes that easier...you are half in and half out...a kind of neutrality...it is harder for me as an English person to project my stuff onto somebody who is already half in and half out...it stayed with me and made sense of my feeling of being half in and half out in this culture’ (Terry)</li> <li>‘It is not about taking it out...it is about shining a light in...and you know...how much training has an impact as to where the light shines and that in itself is the culture...the therapy culture’ (Terry)</li> <li>‘Things came up for me...rejection of the language of the British Empire or Great Britain...and it threw up an image...image...it was quite sort of...I kind of dispelled of...and didn't want it’(Matthew)</li> </ul>
	Making Sense of ‘Missing’	Making Sense of ‘Missing’	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>‘You know that TA model of the controlling parent and the adopted child...neither can become the adult...the different roles...can't move to the I-Thou position...there is a complementary...it could work even though dysfunction...it works on that level but it traps both parties...both parties cant move forward...towards a more adult relationship’ (Gary)</li> <li>‘There is a really gorgeous piece of TA theory that uses the ego states...which describes symbiosis...does anyone...you see two set ego states represented with a kind of a boundary around parent and adult of one and the child of another...as though two individuals or cultures in this case act as if though they only have all of those things...there is also a second order symbiosis...</li> </ul>
	Structuring an il Conceptual ework	structuring	

## **Appendix 11**

### **Metanoia Research Ethics Committee Approval**



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Lucy O'Connor  
DCPsych programme  
Metanoia Institute

16<sup>th</sup> January 2012

Dear Lucy

RE: Irishness and Englishness in the 'white' therapeutic dyad. (*ref: 2/11-12*)

I am pleased to let you know that the above project has been granted ethical approval by Metanoia Research Ethics Committee. If in the course of carrying out the project there are any new developments that may have ethical implications, please inform me as Chair of the Research Ethics Committee.

Yours sincerely,

Prof Vanja Orlans  
On behalf of:  
Peter Pearce  
Chair of Metanoia Research Ethics Committee